

John Adney, Ambulance Driver

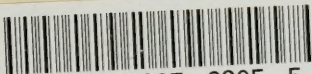


by
**Dillon
Wallace**

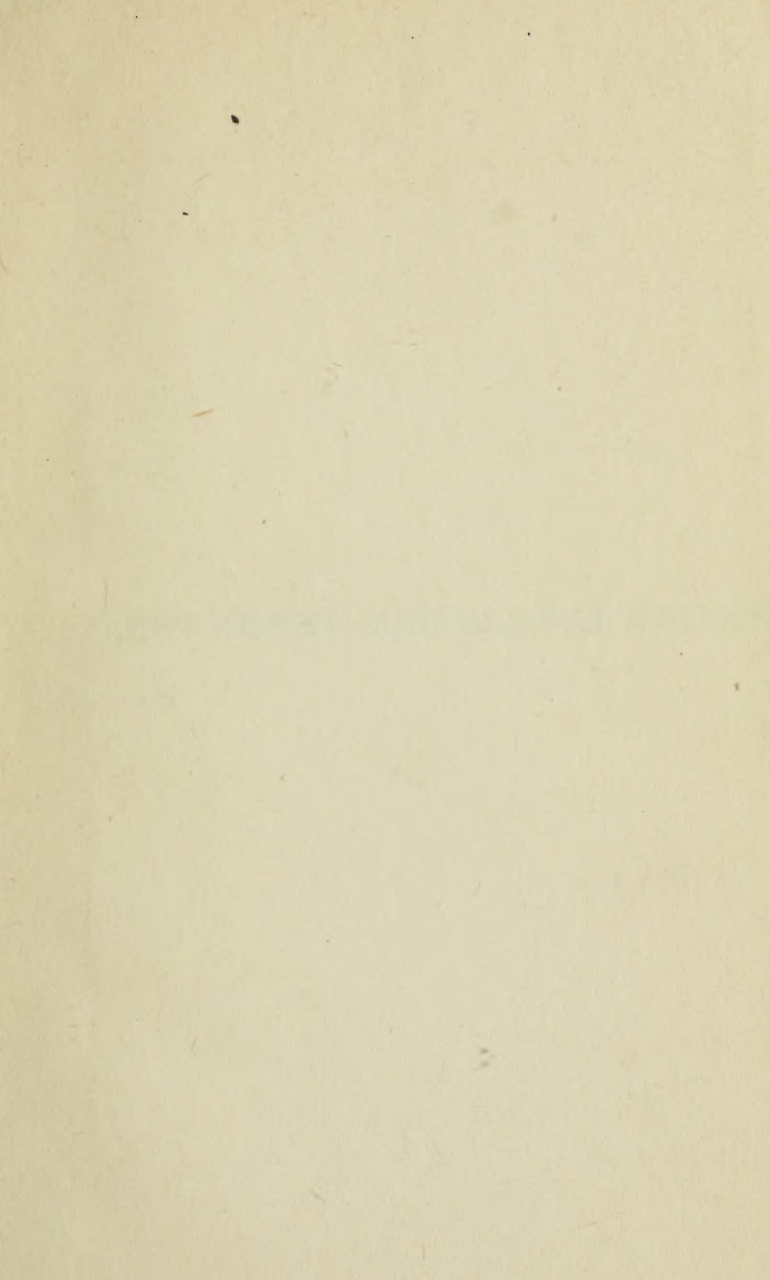


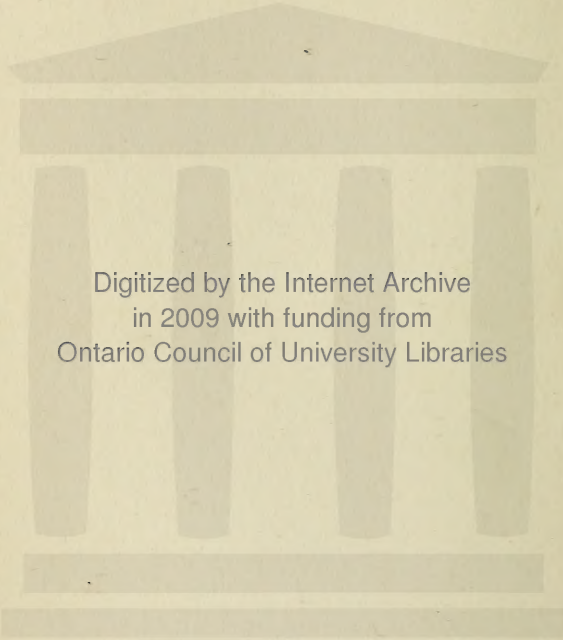
THE LIBRARY OF
YORK
UNIVERSITY

Neal Rissingill
Landon Ontario



3 9007 0307 9205 5





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
Ontario Council of University Libraries

JOHN ADNEY, AMBULANCE DRIVER





An explosion that sent John staggering back against the car

[Page 208]

John Adney, Ambulance Driver

BY
DILLON WALLACE

AUTHOR OF

"The Fur Trail Adventurers," "The Lure of the Labrador
Wild," "The Wilderness Castaways," "Bobby
of the Labrador," etc.

Dillon Wallace

FRONTISPIECE BY
J. ALLEN ST. JOHN



CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG & CO.
1919

725
3495
143
16

Copyright
A. C. McClurg & Co.
1919

Published November, 1919

Copyrighted in Great Britain

To

MY BOY SCOUTS
OF OLD TROOP I OF BEACON, N. Y.,
Who Served with the American Volunteer
Ambulance, or Shouldered Rifles, in
Answer to Their Country's Call

You were America's self, dear lad —
The first swift son of your bright, free land
To heed the call of the Inner Command —

To image its spirit in such rare deeds
As braced the valor of France, who knows
That the heart of America thrills with her woes.

ROWLAND THIRLMERE

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I The Second Steward of the <i>Gorgonia</i>	1
II A Secret and Hazardous Mission	24
III "Use the Automatic"	48
IV Surprised and Disarmed	69
V "T-a-k-e Cover! T-a-k-e Cover!"	77
VI The Inhuman Hun	91
VII The Man from Arizona	100
VIII The Hun Gunners Make a Hit	107
IX The Fight on the Raft	117
X Hog Tying a Pirate	124
XI "We're in the Fight, Kid"	130
XII In a French Hospital	137
XIII Volunteers for the Ambulance Service	152
XIV The Package at the Office	162
XV Off to the Front	178
XVI How Billy Died	197
XVII Captured	210
XVIII Planning Escape	216

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIX Stealing Through the German Lines . . .	234
XX Alone in No Man's Land	253
XXI The Fight in the Shell Hole	264
XXII The Escape	272
XXIII Trailing the Spy	283
XXIV "The Yanks Are Here"	294

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
An explosion that sent John staggering back against the car <i>Frontispiece</i>	
"Get up! Don't you try to run either! If you do I'll shoot!"	78
Bronk proceeded to pull in the spluttering German as he would have hauled in a big fish	122
They had hardly reached the German wire entangle- ments when an illuminating bomb was sent up .	250

John Adney, Ambulance Driver

CHAPTER I

THE SECOND STEWARD OF THE GORGONIA

RAIN had been falling since noon, and gave promise of continuing throughout the night. The air was chill and raw, and John Adney, wet and uncomfortable in a light suit of gray serge, took temporary refuge under the generous coping that protected the entrance of one of the great office buildings on lower Broadway.

It was five o'clock of a May evening in the year 1917. The business day was at an end, and the building was pouring forth its population to augment the hurrying, jostling crowds upon the sidewalks. It seemed to John Adney that he had never seen so many people in all his life, and never before in the

seventeen years of his more or less uneventful career had he felt so much alone in the world and so lonely. There was no man or woman in all the thousands passing before him that he could call by name, and, he was quite sure, none who had even a passing interest in him.

Whenever during the day he had ventured an inquiry, the replies had been so brief as to be almost curt and impatient. In every instance those addressed had hastened upon their way as though grudging the moment given him. In this world of hurry and contention and turmoil, where life is either a struggle for riches or existence, there is small room in men's hearts for kindly or sympathetic interest in others. To the average man of the great city, a stranger is little less an outcast, and is worthy little more consideration, than a homeless cat.

This, at least, was John Adney's conclusion this somber May evening, and he felt himself as completely alone and as friendless as ever he could have been in a vast unpeopled wilderness or naked, silent desert.

He was an insignificant figure, standing

close to the massive granite walls of the building that he might not obstruct the doorway or be jostled by the passing throng. He was of medium height, but of muscular build and well set up. His bearing, his broad square shoulders and his grace of movement when he shifted his position to make room for another refugee from the storm, suggested one trained in athletics. His round, freckled face was lighted by quick, eager brown eyes. He wore a small, round slouch hat, pushed well back upon his head, and over his forehead hung a refractory lock of brick-red hair.

John Adney was troubled. Two stingy sandwiches had served him for a midday meal, and his healthy young appetite was now crying in no uncertain tones for immediate satisfaction. The fifteen cents reposing in his left trousers' pocket would neither purchase him a substantial dinner, nor would it secure him a night's lodging. His problem, therefore, was one of necessity, and one that required prompt solution.

The man who had joined John Adney under the coping was eyeing the youth with evident

interest. He was tall, wiry, blond, and perhaps thirty years of age, and had the carriage and appearance of one who had known military service. With a keen, penetrating gaze he seemed now to be taking John Adney's measure with more than casual interest, and presently he broke in upon John's troubled thoughts with the remark:

"Bad weather to be knocking about."

"Yes," answered John, turning to the stranger a quick, appreciative glance, glad of someone to whom he could speak, "unpleasant when you're not prepared for it."

"Are you a stranger in the city?" asked the man, glancing at the suit case at John's feet.

"I arrived last night," explained John. "I expected to stop with my brother, but I didn't find him. He wasn't looking for me, and he's gone away, and no one could tell me where."

"That's unfortunate," said the man. "Where are you stopping?"

"I—" John hesitated, "I haven't anywhere to stop tonight—that is, I don't know where I'll stop."

"I'm somewhat alone myself," said the stranger. "Suppose you come with me and dine. There's a good restaurant in the next block. There'll be plenty of time for you to get a room later."

"Thank you—but—" John was plainly embarrassed, "—I don't think I'll eat now."

"I'm sorry," and the stranger was evidently disappointed. "I hoped you'd come with me. I don't like to eat alone, and I'll have to unless you favor me."

"I'd like to—but—I'm broke," confessed John, "dead broke, and I couldn't pay for a meal."

"Oh, well," and the man spoke heartily, "if that's all that prevents come along. You're my guest you know, and I'll pay the shot. I won't be denied the pleasure of your company now, so come along and we'll talk over your dilemma while we eat."

"It's kind of you, but it doesn't seem right to let you do it," John protested weakly. "You don't know me—and—there's no reason why you should do it. I don't think I should accept."

"It's a business proposition. I'm offering you no favor," said the man bluntly. "You're a stranger in the city. You're down and out. You haven't any money, and you can't get anything to eat and you can't get lodgings in New York without money. No one knows you and no one would trust you anyhow. There's no sentiment here. Everybody for himself. You need a job to earn money and I need a man for a job, and if I'm a judge of men, and I think I am, you'll fit the job. Come along with me. We'll eat and then we'll talk business. We can't talk business while we're hungry."

The stranger apparently considered the matter settled, for he turned up his coat collar as protection from the storm and stepped briskly out.

"All right," agreed John stooping for his suit case, and following. "If it's that way I'll go. I need a job, I'm hungry as seven bears and I've got to have a place to sleep."

"Good!" said the man, as the two pushed their way through the crowd. "I thought you were a stranger and might be open for

work. That's why I asked you. We can talk while we eat. I'm a sociable person and I never eat alone when there's anyone to eat with me."

A block up Broadway they turned into Cortlandt Street, little less crowded than the main thoroughfare, and the man remarked:

"There's a good place in the Temple Building. I think we'll go there if you don't mind."

"Anywhere you wish," agreed John. "Any place will look pretty good to me tonight."

Presently they turned into the building, and descending a broad marble stairway entered a spacious basement restaurant. It was one of the better class of eating places common to the downtown district.

"Well, here we are," said the stranger, pausing to speak in German to a waiter whom he seemed to know, and who led them to a table in a secluded corner, where they might talk undisturbed while they ate, and where, at the same time, they had a view of their surroundings.

"You speak German?" John remarked when they were seated.

"Yes," said the man eyeing John keenly. "Do you speak or understand the language?"

"No," answered John, "but I thought it was German you were speaking."

"I speak three or four languages," said the stranger as he scanned the bill of fare. "A fellow picks it up knocking around the world. What'll we have? How will some little necks and then some tomato soup do as a starter?"

"That sounds good," said John. "I'll like anything you order."

"Very well. And bring some celery, waiter," the stranger directed. "Put on a sirloin steak for two, smothered in onions, and hashed brown potatoes. And, waiter, bring us some beer."

"Thank you," John objected, "I never drink beer. I'd prefer coffee, if you don't mind."

"Coffee for one, waiter," the stranger corrected, "and hurry it along, now!"

The man leaned back in his chair as the waiter hurried away and began a survey of the room, apparently looking for someone in particular. Suddenly his face lighted with

satisfaction as a large, bearded man entered the restaurant. John observed this, and he observed also that the waiter to whom his companion had spoken in German upon their arrival pointed them out to the large man, who immediately made his way to their table, and greeted the stranger:

"Goot efening, Mr. Schmidt. Haff you any news for me yet?" he asked, eyeing John as he spoke.

"Good evening, Mr. Karlstadt," the stranger acknowledged. "No news except that we sail tomorrow morning, as scheduled, with a full cargo. Nothing else since I saw you this morning."

"Ah, yes. That iss goot news," said Mr. Karlstadt drawing up a chair and seating himself while the two continued to speak in German.

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Schmidt presently, turning to John. "You will forgive us for speaking in German. My friend speaks the language better than English. Let me introduce you. Mr. Karlstadt, this is my friend, Mr. ——"

"Adney," prompted John.

"Mr. Adney," he continued.

"I am happy to know you, Mr. Adney," Mr. Karlstadt acknowledged, "and now I vill say goot night. I haff some friends vaiting for me at yet another table."

"I must beg your pardon again for speaking to the gentleman in German," John's companion apologized when Mr. Karlstadt had gone to join his friends, "but, as I said, he speaks English so poorly it is sometimes difficult to understand him. You said you did not understand German?"

"No," said John, "I don't understand it, but I didn't mind in the least."

"Thank you," and John fancied there was reflected satisfaction in the accent. "I must also ask you to forgive my rudeness in failing to introduce myself. I am Frank Smith, second steward of the steamship *Gorgonia*. May I ask you, Mr. Adney, where your home is?"

"In Duluth," said John. "You see I'm a long way from home, and because I am I appreciate your kindness all the more for inviting me here to dine with you, Mr. Smith."

"Don't thank me for that," Mr. Smith objected. "It's a matter of business, as I told you before. You look like the sort of chap I need. My motive, you see, was selfish, so please don't thank me or look upon it as a favor. I believe you said you had come to find your brother, and that he was not in the city?"

"Yes," replied John. "My brother Ben is a salesman, or was, for a wholesale grocery firm here, and he asked me to come on and he'd get me a place with the firm. I thought I'd surprise him, and I didn't let him know when to expect me, or that I'd decided to come. I worked my way from Duluth to Buffalo on a lake steamer, and then came on to New York by train. But I spent more money than I should have in the ports where we stopped, and when I reached New York last night about ten o'clock I had only four dollars left."

"Four dollars won't go far in New York," observed Mr. Smith with a smile as the waiter set the clams before them.

"I found that out," grinned John, squeez-

ing some lemon over his clams. "I was too late to look for Ben last night, and I asked a man where I could get a night's lodging. He pointed out a big hotel near the station. It was too fine a place to stay unless a fellow has a roll, but I didn't know where else to go, and I had my suit case to carry, so I got a room there for two dollars. Then I got something to eat, and this morning after I had paid for my breakfast and room I had just seventy cents left. I didn't mind, for I thought I'd find Ben and he'd help me out till I earned something."

"And when you didn't find him your troubles began."

"Yes, and I'm up against it for a way out, unless you give me a job," said John with undisguised eagerness. "At his boarding place they told me Ben enlisted two weeks ago, but they didn't know his address. He's in camp somewhere, but I'm broke and couldn't look him up even if I knew where to look. Anyhow it's up to me to get a job."

"What have you been doing?"

"Driving tote team."

"Tote team? What's that?"

"Why, a team hauling grub and outfit in a lumber camp. I've been with the Big Falls Lumber Company in Minnesota."

"How long were you doing that?"

"Just this winter. I went to school the winter before until January, when my father died. Then I went to the lumber camp and worked as a swamper and helped with the drive last spring." John was silent for a moment and winked his eyes hard. "Father got a cold and pneumonia set in and—he went."

"You said you were 'swamping' and helped with the 'drive'—what do you mean?"

"Why 'swamping' is clearing the brush and making way for the choppers. The 'drive' is when the logs are floated down the river on high water in the spring. They're floated down to the booms at the mill. We have to walk out over them and keep them going and prevent them jamming and piling up in the river."

"Do you mean to say you walk out over

logs floating in the river?" Mr. Smith looked at John skeptically.

"Yes," said John simply, "that's the only way to keep them going."

"Pretty nervy and dangerous work, I should say. I think I'd fall into the water."

"Likely you would until you learned how," John laughed. "It's easy when you learn. Father was interested in the lumber company, and used to take me up every spring to see the drive. I learned to ride logs when I was pretty small, and I can do it as well as any of the jacks now."

"Is your mother living?"

"She died three years ago. All our folks are gone now but just Ben and myself."

"Hard lines," but there was more of conventional courtesy than sympathy in Mr. Smith's voice. "I'm asking a good many questions," he continued, "for if I'm to give you a job I want to know all about you and how well you're fitted for it. It isn't inquisitiveness, it's business. Will you excuse it?"

"Certainly. That's all right," said John.

"Of course you want to know, and I don't mind telling you."

"That's good. Will you tell me why you left school? If your father was interested in the lumber company, he must have left you an income that would have kept you at school."

"He owned a share in the lumber company and owned a ranch, too, but Mr. Squibb, father's lawyer, said there wasn't enough to pay his debts when the estate was settled. So I had to go to work. I've saved most of the money I've earned and put it in a savings bank, and I'm going back to school next winter. I'd have been ready for college next winter if I'd kept in school."

"Couldn't your brother have kept you in school?"

"Yes, he wanted to. Ben's fine that way," said John eagerly. "But I wanted to make my own way."

"That's a good spirit!" Mr. Smith commended. "Stand on your own feet, and ask no odds of anyone!"

"I don't know what the work is that you

have for me to do," said John, "but I can drive a car. We had a car when father was living, and I learned to drive and repair it. After the river work was over at the lumber camp last spring I got a job for the summer on a ranch. They had me driving team and working a tractor."

"I don't want you to drive a team or run a tractor," Mr. Smith laughed. "I'm not a ranchman."

"I didn't know but the knowledge might be useful—that you might need someone to run a car," said John. "I thought I might get a job driving a car here in New York, when I found Ben was gone. I've been looking around all the afternoon, but everyone said I was too young. I'm seventeen."

"No doubt your experience in the lumber camp and on the ranch and driving cars has been good experience for you," observed Mr. Smith, lifting a clam on his fork and eyeing it before transferring it to his mouth. "It is always good experience for a fellow to get out into the field and make his way alone. It teaches self-reliance, resourcefulness, and in-

dependence. Everything you have done has made you more fit to do something else. You said you had been on a lake steamer. Do you like the water, and are you a good sailor?"

"I was just a deck hand. I think I'd make a good sailor, for I like the water."

"Can you fight if you have to?" Mr. Smith asked rather irrelevantly.

"I guess so," John grinned. "I had to do a little of it in the lumber camp."

"Good," and for a while they ate in silence.

"I'm an Eagle Scout," said John presently, drawing from his pocket his registration certificate and handing it across the table for Mr. Smith's inspection.

"I don't know what this may stand for," Mr. Smith casually examined the card, "but scouts generally are supposed to know the value of discipline. That is an important qualification in the position I'm going to talk about pretty soon. You must have learned something of it in the lumber camp, too. I'm looking for someone who will do the thing he's told to do without asking the reason why, and who will not tell his business to anyone

else. And he must know how to get out of a scrape if he gets into one. In other words, one who can be trusted under all circumstances, and who is able to stand on his own feet and make his own way."

"‘A Scout is trustworthy,’ that’s the first Scout law," John quoted, as he replaced his certificate in his pocket. "We’re taught also to keep our eyes open and see things, and to use our heads to think things out for ourselves," he added.

Mr. Smith glanced up quickly and looked searchingly at John for a moment. Satisfied, apparently, that the remark had no significance, he turned his attention to his dinner.

John was enjoying the atmosphere of luxury which surrounded him. Prosperous-looking people occupied the tables, silent and efficient waiters moved about, and his own waiter anticipated his wants before he realized them himself. His water glass was kept filled, and his butter dish was replenished before it was emptied, and as he ate he quite forgot his unpleasant position of an hour before.

"What dessert shall we have?" asked Mr.

Smith when the steak was finished and cleared away and a salad served. "How does apple cake strike your fancy?"

"Thank you," said John. "That will be good."

"Waiter, bring us some apple cake, and bring coffee and cigars," Mr. Smith directed.

"Thank you, I don't smoke," said John.

"Now," said Mr. Smith when they were through eating and he had lighted a cigar, "let's talk business. How would you like a trip to England?"

"Why, I'd like it!" exclaimed John in eager astonishment. "Could I get back in time for school in the fall?"

"You could make several voyages, and still be in time for school," Mr. Smith assured. "I'm second steward on the British steamship *Gorgonia*, and I can find a place for you on the ship, if you'd care for that kind of a job."

"I'd like to go!" John interjected excitedly. "It's a great chance! A chance I've wanted!"

"What I want is someone who will obey orders and take risks." Mr. Smith removed

his cigar from his lips, and looked straight into John's face. "There may be some danger and adventure in the job I've got to offer you. You'll have to keep the business to yourself too. You'll talk to no one about what transpires between us, no matter what happens. You'll not so much as mention our dinner here tonight, or any incident that has come under your observation since we met on Broadway. You'll do exactly as you're told under all circumstances. There's some money in it. Do you want that kind of a job?"

"If it's straight work—straight business inside and out." John squared his jaw. "I'm not afraid to take chances, and I know how to keep my business to myself."

"That sounds well." Mr. Smith looked John through and through with his sharp gray eyes. "You should understand that if you accept this position there'll be no harm come to you and you'll be running no risk if you keep your nerve and let no one into your confidence. If you don't keep your nerve or if you talk to anyone concerning the business or any circumstance connected with it

or with our association, it will mean trouble and a great deal of danger for yourself, and others. Now what have you to say?"

"I want to know what the job is and what is expected of me before I answer that," John insisted. "I'm not afraid to take chances, but I'm not going to get mixed up in anything that isn't straight, honest work."

"It is to serve in the steward's department of the *Gorgonia*, and in addition to act as custodian of an important package during the voyage over, and possibly to act as messenger and deliver it on the other side," Mr. Smith explained. "It is easy and simple enough if you tell no one you have the package in your possession, and if anyone, no matter who, asks you questions know nothing and say nothing. The package will contain papers important to the British Government. There are likely to be men on the ship who would take the papers from you at all hazards if they knew you had them. There are spies everywhere. They would even kill to get possession of them. You see how important it will be for you to keep the fact strictly to yourself."

"Why don't you or some of the other officers take charge of the papers?" asked John.

"Because as an officer of the ship I might be suspected of having them. No one would suspect you. You are an American, and—pardon me—just a boy. On the previous voyage my stateroom was searched during my absence. We can't trust anybody."

"It's—it's a great responsibility," John hesitated. "I don't mind the danger, and I'd like to do it if you think I can and if it's to help in the war. I'm too young to enlist, but I'd like to do something to help."

"Yes," assured Mr. Smith, "it's to help in the war, and if these papers are delivered safely they will be of very great assistance indeed."

"All right," agreed John, "I'll do it."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Smith. "That's a patriotic decision. Your ship's wages for the voyage will be fifty dollars. When these papers are safely landed and delivered on the other side I'll give you another hundred as a bonus."

"Oh, I didn't expect that!" said John.

"I'll be well satisfied with the fifty dollars. I'd be glad to take the papers just to be doing some war service."

"Nevertheless you'll get the hundred," laughed Mr. Smith. "It's worth it, and we'll call it a bargain?"

"Yes, thank you," agreed John, now highly excited with the prospect.

"Good! Come on then. We'll go to the ship at once."

Mr. Smith handed the waiter a bill in payment for their entertainment, together with a generous tip, and as he did so spoke a few words aside in German. Then John followed him into the street.

CHAPTER II

A SECRET AND HAZARDOUS MISSION

THE pier, on the North River front, was ablaze with electric lights. Men were working with feverish energy. Heavily laden trucks were moving down the pier to the *Gorgonia's* side, and as quickly as they could be unloaded moving out again to make room for other heavily laden trucks, which stood in an impatient line reaching out into the rumble and roar of West Street.

John, with his suit case, followed Mr. Smith down the busy pier and up the gangway to the *Gorgonia's* deck, where donkey engines chugged and churned in an efficient manner, hoisting boxes and barrels and bales from the pier below and lowering them into the depths of the great hold.

"We're late getting the cargo aboard, but we'll sail on time," remarked the steward as they descended the companionway stairs.

Below decks he led John the length of a narrow passageway, where he opened a state-room door.

"We haven't many passengers, and we can pretty nearly have our pick of rooms," said he, turning on the light. "These are your quarters. My room adjoins. You are to be a bedroom steward. Have you ever made beds?"

"Yes," answered John, surveying the comfortable little room, "I made my own bed at the scout camps where I've been and in the lumber camp."

"That will be your work, and keeping the rooms clean," directed Mr. Smith. "I'll have one of the other stewards show you the routine and help you until you're acquainted with your duties. Don't talk with passengers unless they speak to you. I'll take up the other matter with you later," he added in a subdued voice. "The matter we were discussing tonight."

"Thank you," said John.

"You'll need different clothes from those you're wearing," continued the steward, sur-

veying John's wet serge suit. "There won't be time to get any ashore, for we'll be busy until sailing time, but I think I can fit you up with a ship's outfit."

"I have warm underwear and a suit of deck clothes I wore on the lake steamer in my grip," suggested John.

"They're probably pretty shabby for your work here. Come along and we'll sign you up. Then we'll see about clothes."

John was led to an office, where the formality of signing articles for the voyage was quickly arranged. This done, he followed the steward to the storeroom, where he was fitted with a blue woolen uniform, a cap and other clothing sufficient for his comfort and neat appearance on the voyage. Finally, after some preliminary instructions in his duties, Mr. Smith left him.

The ship, the steward had told him, was to sail the following day, and immediately he was alone, John wrote a glowing account of his experiences to Mr. Henry Squibb, in Duluth, who had been his father's lawyer, and was his own rather disinterested guard-

ian, assuring Mr. Squibb of his return in the autumn in season to re-enter school. From his otherwise empty wallet he produced a partly filled stamp book, stamped the letter and returning the wallet to his pocket ascended to the deck. Threading his way through the traffic on the wharf, he passed out into West Street, and a block south and on the opposite side of the street discovered a mail box, into which he dropped his letter.

Weary as he had been when he took refuge under the Broadway coping, the experiences and exciting incidents of the evening had stimulated and rested him. The sudden change in his fortunes had come in a most unexpected manner. An opportunity to visit foreign shores, an experience of which he had dreamed, but which had seemed quite beyond his reach, was his. He thrilled with the thought that he was to take part in an important war mission, and the fact that it was to be attended with possible danger no doubt added to its importance. This, truly, was a great adventure upon which he had entered. It was, indeed, to lead to greater ad-

ventures than John's wildest imaginings could picture.

When the letter was posted, John stood for a little under the awning of a darkened shop to watch the crowded traffic of the wharves opposite, and to indulge, perhaps, an excusable sense of self-importance, for he himself was now a part of the great machine that was moving men and munitions to the battle fields of Europe.

Presently he was conscious of a familiar figure passing on the sidewalk, and quickly recognized Mr. Smith's German friend of the restaurant. Mr. Karlstadt turned into the entrance of a lighted saloon two doors beyond John's darkened awning. Here he paused to lower an umbrella and shake from it accumulated moisture. He stood for a moment in the doorway looking across West Street where the *Gorgonia* lay at her wharf, then entered the saloon.

Mr. Karlstadt had scarcely closed the door behind him, when John observed a man crossing the street from the wharf, and as he approached recognized Mr. Smith. The stew-

ard dropped into the shadow of a doorway, looked cautiously up and down and across West Street, as though to assure himself he was not observed, and then he, too, entered the saloon.

"What," John asked, "could this mean?" There was apparently some confidential relationship between these two men, and one of them was a German. John had no doubt that the meeting had been arranged when they spoke together in German in the restaurant. "Why," he asked, "was all this secrecy necessary?"

But in the end he temporarily dismissed his questionings and doubts with the explanation that Mr. Karlstadt was doubtless interested in some cargo shipment, and Mr. Smith was meeting him in the interests of the ship. Even then he was not able to explain to himself why they should meet in a saloon and not on the ship. Finally, wearied with his day's experiences, he returned to the ship and to his bunk.

John awoke early the following morning, and with his first waking thoughts came the

realization that he was actually to visit England, and with his own eyes see the fringe, at least, of a nation at war, and perhaps see and meet men who had been in the trenches under fire, and who had done brave deeds. John Adney was a hero worshiper. What boy or man with red blood in his veins is not? And now John was in a fair way to see modern-day heroes.

He was also a sentimentalist. The soldiers of the Great War were not alone doing heroic deeds. They were fighting for an ideal, and giving their lives for the ideal—the supreme sacrifice.

John hurried into the clothing supplied him the previous evening, and was scarcely dressed when the door connecting his room with that of Mr. Smith opened, and the steward looked in.

“Good morning. I was looking in to see if you were up,” said he. “I didn’t tell you last night what time to be around. Come along and you’ll get your detail. This will be a busy day.”

“Good morning,” John greeted, giving the

last brush to his red hair. "I'm up and ready for anything."

"Here, Blick!" the steward called to a man emerging from a stateroom, as he and John came out into the passageway.

"Yes, sir," said Blick, who approached with a limp.

"This is John Adney, another bedroom steward. He's green at the work and you will instruct him in his duties. He's to have charge of the rooms at this end."

"Aye, sir. I'll show 'im," and as Mr. Smith disappeared up the companionway stairs, Blick turned to John. "'E's a queer un now. Why 'e's tyking on another man I carn't see. We 'as all we needs with 'arf the cabins empty."

"Isn't there work for another man?" asked John, somewhat discomfited.

"There'll be work, I fancy," said Blick. "Work'll be found. They always finds plenty of work. But 'arf the cabins is empty, along with the submarines. 'E may expect a full cabin coming back, and 'e may be tyking you on for the voyage back. Men are 'ard to get

these days over 'ome. They're all in the trenches fightin' the 'Uns. I'd be there myself, only I'm lame and they wouldn't tyke me. I feel like a blighter 'ere, and I'd like to be in the trenches too."

"So would I," said John, "but I'm too young I suppose."

"You're a strappin' lad," observed Blick, looking John over critically. "Over 'ome lads like you fights. Plenty of smaller lads, and I'm not doubtin' younger ones, 'ave gone over from old Hengland. You'll be 'avin' a charnce if you're feelin' that way."

"They won't accept us in the United States Army till we're eighteen, and I'm not eighteen yet," said John.

"The time'll come *I'm* thinkin' when they won't arsk whether you're heighteen or heighty," Blick prognosticated pessimistically. "But we'll lick the 'Uns sometime. I'm thinkin' they'll tyke me with all the lame ones and young ones and old ones before they do it though."

"We have plenty of men in the United States and we'll have a fine big army over

there pretty soon," said John proudly squaring his shoulders.

"I'm not saying Hamerica 'as or 'asn't the men, but if she 'as she's waited a long time and she 'asn't done much yet. It's as much 'er fight as our's, but she's just stood off and let us do the fightin' for 'er. She's got no ships to move men anyway, and if she 'ad ships the sea is full of 'Un pirates with U boats to sink 'em." Blick shook his head solemnly. "Hamerica 'as been slow."

"You'll see how slow the United States is!" said John with some asperity. "We'll find a way to get the men over. We've never been beaten yet, and we won't be now. We're in this scrap for a finish fight, and we'll lick the Huns to a frazzle."

"To a what?" asked Blick.

"To a frazzle—till they're down and out and done for, and say they've had enough."

"That's the way we talked at 'ome at first," said Blick, "but the 'Uns'll tyke a lot of punishment yet before they're done."

"Well we'll give it to them," John declared proudly.

"Over 'ome we thought Hamericans were too proud to fight," said Blick.

"We're not, and the Huns will find that out," but John colored with remembrance of the unlucky phrase Blick threw at him.

John was shown the rooms that he was to care for. They were all in the passageway in which his own room was located. He learned from his new friend Blick that it was unusual for stewards to have rooms adjoining those of passengers, but the second steward had doubtless assigned himself and John the rooms they occupied because there were no passengers for them, and they were larger and more comfortable than the usual quarters assigned stewards.

"But they 'as the rest of us in the regular quarters," Blick complained.

"How long will it take us to cross?" asked John.

"It'll tyke about nine days the way things goes now," said Blick. "We made it in six before the war, but now the ship 'as to pick 'er way with submarines popping up heverywhere, and it tykes eight or nine."

"Has Mr. Smith been on the *Gorgonia* long as second steward?" John inquired.

"This is 'is third voyage," said Blick, adding in an undertone: "'E's a queer dick."

"In what way do you mean?" asked John.

"I carn't say," said Blick in a tone that indicated he had no desire to discuss the matter.

After mess came the hustle and bustle of the last hours before sailing, until at length lines were cast off and the ship passed slowly down the river and through the bay. A damp cold mist covered the water. The vessels of the harbor, as the ship slipped past them, loomed gray and ghostlike through the fog. Presently Governor's Island and the Statue of Liberty were lost to view, and at length the *Gorgonia* felt her way through the narrow passage where Blick said buoys supported submarine nets. Then at last they were upon the open ocean, and John thrilled with the thought that the voyage had actually begun and he was on his way to Europe.

John did his work thoroughly and well. It was easy work enough compared with deck duty on a lake freighter, or driving a "tote"

team in a lumber camp. He had few rooms to care for, and the passengers who occupied them were never exacting. Some of them were young men going to France to join the American Volunteer Ambulance Corps— young men filled with energy and life, who preferred to do for themselves and rough it. And there was Colonel Dillingham of the British Army, who, ship's gossip said, was returning from an important secret mission for his government.

On the evening of the first day at sea, Colonel Dillingham rang his call bell, and John responded.

"Are you the steward who cares for this room?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, sir," answered John. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No," said the colonel, "not at present, but doubtless there will be times when I shall require some special service, and I wish to know the steward who cares for my room."

"Very well, sir," and John turned to go.

"Wait a moment," said Colonel Dilling-

ham, and as John faced about the colonel handed him a five dollar bill.

"What do you wish me to do with this, sir?" asked John.

"Anything you choose," said the colonel in mild astonishment. "It is for yourself."

"But—but—" stammered John, color rising in his face, "I haven't done anything to earn it!"

"It's a fee I usually pay the steward who makes up my room," explained the colonel a little crisply. "It's in anticipation of special services you may be called upon to render me outside of your regular duties."

"Thank you, sir," said John, understanding now that it was intended as a tip, and holding it out to Colonel Dillingham, "the ship pays me to do that, and I prefer not to take tips. It—it would sort of take away my self-respect."

"Well!" exclaimed Colonel Dillingham, looking at John curiously as he folded the bill and returned it to his pocket. "You are the first steward I've ever known who wasn't looking for tips!"

"I'm not a regular steward, sir," said John. "That is, I'm a steward just for this voyage, but it's not a business with me."

Colonel Dillingham was interested, and John must needs sit for a little in his cabin and chat, in the course of which John told him of his experiences in the lumber camp and on the ranch and his determination to earn his own way. The colonel was in no sense a snob. He commended John for his independence and willingness to turn his hand to any employment that offered. And so it came about that Colonel Dillingham, who was undoubtedly a personage of importance, and John Adney, who for the time, at least, was an ordinary bedroom steward on a trans-Atlantic liner, and therefore a most unimportant person, became friends.

Immediately they were at sea, once and sometimes twice daily, fire drills were held. John understood that these frequent drills were in preparation for possible emergency when the ship should enter the danger zone where submarines lurked in waiting for their prey. There were guns mounted fore and

aft on the ship's deck, with efficient-looking gunners in charge of them, and in these John had vast confidence.

"There's no tellin' what may 'appen," Blick remarked one day. "We're has likely has any other ship to be torpedoed. The 'Un pirates is everywhere. I've been on two ships has were sunk halready."

"Were any people killed?" asked John in some awe.

"Once there was," said Blick, "but I got on a bit of wreckage, and the patrol boats picked me up."

It was on the second day out from New York that John encountered Mr. Smith leaving Colonel Dillingham's room, and locking the door behind him. Colonel Dillingham was, at the time, on deck.

"I was inspecting your rooms, Adney," said the steward cheerfully. "You're doing very well—quite as well as an old hand, and in some respects better."

"Thank you, sir," John acknowledged, pleased with the compliment.

Several hours later he again ran upon the

steward at the door of Colonel Dillingham's room, but Mr. Smith passed on, and whether or not he had entered the room John did not know. He had reason later to recall these occurrences vividly, though at the time they made no impression upon him.

As previously stated, there was a connecting door between John's room and that of Mr. Smith. The key to this was on Mr. Smith's side of the door. Since the morning of sailing, when the steward had looked in upon John, and placed him under Blick's tuition, it had remained closed. The steward and John had had no other intercourse or conversation than that necessary in the performance of their duties, Mr. Smith as second steward and John as his subordinate. No further mention had been made of the package of papers of which John was to have been custodian, and he had decided that Mr. Smith had changed his mind and had concluded, after all, not to impose the responsibility upon him.

When he was preparing to retire, however, on the evening of the fifth day at sea,

and two days after he had discovered the steward leaving Colonel Dillingham's room, he heard the key in the connecting door turn, the door opened, and Mr. Smith looked in.

"Before you go to bed, Adney," he said, "I'd like to see you."

"All right," John invited. "Come in, sir, and make yourself at home."

"Thank you," said the steward, entering and seating himself. "It's about that business of ours," he continued, drawing an envelope from an inside pocket of his coat. "Here is the package of papers. Not very large, but tremendously important. Have you a safe place for it?"

"I can keep it in my suit case," John suggested, "I haven't any safer place. I'm sure it will be all right there."

"No, that won't do. It is the first place they'd be looked for, if there was any suspicion you had them," the steward objected.

He arose, drew back the sheets and blankets on John's bed, lifted the end of the mattress, drew his pocket knife, and proceeded deftly to rip the ticking until an opening was

made wide enough to admit the envelope. Then, with great care, he separated the filling in the mattress, and slipped the envelope into the opening.

"Just a moment now, and we'll have the job well done," said he, retiring to his own room and returning in a moment with needle and thread with which he re-sewed the opening.

"That'll do it," said he with satisfaction, surveying his handiwork. "No one would ever suspect there was anything hidden there. Leave the package where it is until the day we reach port. Make up your bed now, and we'll see how it looks."

John replaced the mattress and remade the bed, as he was directed.

"Good! Perfectly safe, Adney!" said the steward with evident relief, adding, as he glanced around the room, "the most innocent-looking room on the ship! No one would ever suspect how much of the world's future reposes in your mattress, Adney."

"Is it so important as that?" asked John, tense with excitement.

"Yes, and you must be impressed with a full realization of the importance." For a moment the steward looked steadily at John, as though endeavoring to read his thoughts.

"I think I appreciate it, and the confidence you are placing in me," John ventured presently.

"I believe you do, or I wouldn't confide in you," Mr. Smith assured. "It all depends upon you now, Adney. Never, as you value your life, breathe of the existence of those papers. I told you once their purport. They are of the highest value to the British Government. You are thoroughly awake to that fact?"

"Yes, sir."

"There is a possibility that I am suspected of being a secret agent of the government, and if that is the case I'll be watched and followed when I leave the ship. I might be waylaid, and if I have that package on me it might be taken from me. Someone other than myself must deliver it, and that is your job. While I am satisfied there is no spy on this ship, we can't afford to take a chance.

That is the reason I have been so careful about concealing the package. For this reason, too, you must never presume to speak to me, except in connection with your duties as bedroom steward, outside our private rooms. Remember that while you're aboard ship you're a bedroom steward and nothing else."

"Very well, sir," said John, whose excitement made it difficult for him to speak calmly.

"Now, in case anything happens that will prevent us speaking in private again, I will give you full instructions what to do," continued Mr. Smith.

"On the morning we reach port place that envelope in the inside pocket of your waistcoat. You will have leave to go ashore. Go to this address—it's not far from the wharves—" The steward printed an address on a card, and handed it to John. "Ring the bell three times, count ten, and then ring it once. When the door is opened, ask for Major Bill. When a man comes to you, ask if he is Major Bill. If he answers, 'No, Quirk,' give him the papers. If he makes any other answer

do not give them to him. Do you understand? Repeat what I have said."

John, in a tense voice, repeated with accuracy the instructions.

"If you should be held up by anybody before the papers are delivered to the right person, and find it impossible to deliver them, destroy them rather than let them fall into other hands. If you find yourself in a tight place, and there's no other way of getting out, shoot and don't have any compunctions about it. It is a soldier's duty, and you will be performing the functions of a soldier. Here is an automatic. Do you know how to use it?"

The steward drew from his pocket an ugly looking automatic pistol, and handed it to John.

"Yes," said John, receiving the pistol in a daze, "I can shoot."

"I have another. Keep that and use it freely if necessary," the steward directed in a hard voice. "It is loaded, but here is an extra clip of cartridges.

"Now I had not intended paying you the bonus until the work was done, but to show

you I'm in earnest and have confidence in you, I'll give you the bonus I promised at once, with fifty dollars added. This may help you to do your part and follow instructions."

He counted out one hundred and fifty dollars, and handed it to John, who received it limply.

"I—I shouldn't take this until I've done my work," John objected. "I'm not sure I should take it at all."

"Put it into your pocket!" the steward commanded a little harshly. "Don't let me hear any more of that!"

John obeyed reluctantly.

"That fixes one matter up, I believe," said Mr. Smith. "But before I bid you good night, I should warn you that if by word or action you reveal anything of what has passed between us, or the existence of those papers, from that moment your life will be in jeopardy. Do you understand the import of my warning?"

"I understand," said John moistening his lips with his tongue.

"Good night. Now don't let it worry you,

Adney," he added reassuringly. "It'll work out all right in your hands I'm satisfied."

"Good night," said John, as the steward re-entered his own room and locked the door.

CHAPTER III

“USE THE AUTOMATIC”

JOHN sat limply in his chair for a long while. At last the great responsibility, which, in a way he had anticipated, but which, nevertheless, had seemed a thing of the distant future, had been laid squarely upon him. It had come suddenly—unexpectedly. The interview with Mr. Smith had left him with the sensations of one experiencing a bad dream.

He could not understand why he should feel this way, unless, at heart, he was a coward. A thousand times he had imagined himself doing brave and daring deeds. He had longed for such an opportunity. He had often pictured himself leaping in front of a fast-moving express train to make a rescue, or rushing into a burning building to save life, or, since the war, leading a desperate charge against the enemy. This was a different sort

of adventure from any John's brain had ever conceived. In passing from the realm of fancy to the world of fact he had suffered a rude awakening.

What would he do if a German spy should attempt to rob him of the papers? Would he be brave and defend them at the risk of his life? Would he dare to use the automatic upon a human being if circumstances brought him face to face with the necessity? John asked himself these questions, and he discovered that he was not in the least sure of his answer.

Then he fell to wondering why he had been drawn into the thing at all, and why Mr. Smith had selected him rather than one of the other men to deliver the papers. It was a delicate and most important mission. The others were mature men, and much older than himself.

"He knows them all better than he knows me," John reasoned. "Any of them could be trusted. There's Blick, now. He knows London, too, and would know where to find the place, and I don't know anything about it."

This recalled the fact that Blick did not like the steward. He had said this plainly on several occasions, and it came to John now that in every instance he had felt that Blick's statements had been given in a tone that warned him to be careful of any dealings he might have with the steward. Now, recalling the men in the steward's department one by one, John was suddenly conscious of the fact that there was none there who had not, at some time during the voyage, expressed a distaste for the second steward. One or two had gone so far as to say they did not believe he was "straight" or to be trusted. These were confidential expressions among the bedroom stewards. None of them had ever definitely stated the reason for his dislike, and John had heretofore attributed it to the tendency sometimes found among men to criticize their superior officers. Now he realized it was something deeper than that.

"I wonder what there was," John asked himself, "between him and that Mr. Karlstadt? That was a German crowd in the restaurant. Mr. Smith speaks German, too.

Then they met in a saloon and acted as though they didn't want to be seen—or Mr. Smith acted that way."

He recalled these events and every minute detail connected with them, and suddenly a suggestion that all was not right arose in his mind, and with it an admission that he never had felt complete confidence in Mr. Smith or the statements the man had made to him.

"Here is Colonel Dillingham," thought John. "He is a British officer on business for the British Government. If it's straight, why doesn't Mr. Smith turn the papers over to him?"

For an instant he was almost decided to go to Colonel Dillingham and lay the matter before him. Then he remembered that he had pledged himself to secrecy.

"What if Mr. Smith is a German spy?" he thought.

The question came to him with startling suddenness. At first he was ashamed of his suspicion, but recollection of the brutal force with which the steward had instructed him to shoot in protection of the papers, and the

hard, almost savage look in the steward's face as he did so, momentarily, at least, almost strengthened the suspicion to conviction. There was also a double meaning which he had subconsciously felt in the suggestion as to his own peril if he failed in the mission.

"I'm a scout," said John, at length. "I've promised to do my duty to God and my country at all times. That's the first thing for me to think about, and that's got to come before my safety. If he's a spy and made me give a promise by deceiving me, I'm not bound to keep the promise. If he's a spy I'd be betraying my country by delivering those papers, but I'm not sure of it and may be doing him a wrong by even thinking that way about him. I've got to find some way of making sure everything is all straight and right and the way he says it is before I deliver them."

With the steward's last warning, John had quite forgotten the money. Suddenly remembering it, he drew forth the roll of bills and looked at them. The possession of the money brought him no joy or satisfaction. As he looked at it there fell upon him a feeling of

repulsion. The money had been forced upon him, but he might, he reasoned, have insisted more strongly upon not accepting it until he had done the required service. Then he would have been under no obligation should future circumstances give him further cause to suspect the steward's honesty and motives.

Was this Judas money? Was the steward paying him to be a Judas and betray his country? Had he become a Benedict Arnold when he accepted it? He was seized with sudden panic. The thought appalled him and made him weak and half sick. The money repelled him. It reeked in filth, and in his excitement he fancied it gave forth an indescribable stench—the stench of human bodies rotting through the service it had purchased. Gingerly he wrapped the roll of bills in a piece of paper, and placed the package in the bottom of his suit case. Then he washed his hands thoroughly to purge himself from the touch.

"I'll give it back to him tomorrow!" he declared. "I won't keep it! If it's for crooked work, I don't want it. If it's all straight and

I'm doing a service to the British Government by delivering the papers, I'll be doing a service to my own country too, and I don't want pay for that."

John undressed and went to bed, but for a long while he lay awake, turning over and over again in his mind the events of the evening and of that other evening when he first met the steward. Finally he decided:

"It isn't the danger of getting hurt that makes me afraid altogether. I guess I'm afraid of that some too. But it's more because this thing don't seem all straight and honest to me. But I wouldn't have thought of that if it hadn't been for the way the steward looked and spoke to me tonight. There's that German and the meeting in the saloon. It don't look right. That German would hurt us all he could. There isn't a German that wouldn't hurt us. Maybe the German and the meeting didn't have anything to do with the papers though, and maybe Mr. Smith is all right. I've got to put it up to him though and be sure."

This last suggestion relieved John's mind

vastly, for the steward had been kind to him, and he wished the man to be what he claimed to be.

"Whatever happens," he continued before dropping into troubled sleep, "I've got to be sure there's no German business mixed up in this. And then I'm a scout, and I've got to be brave and do my duty. I'll return the money to Mr. Smith tomorrow anyhow. If it's going to help us in the war I want to deliver the papers. It'll be a good turn to the country, and not many of the fellows have a chance to do that kind of a good turn."

John awoke in the morning with a sense of heavy responsibility upon his heart. He was not happy. He could not shake himself free from the feeling that he had taken part in some desperately treasonable act. No argument that he put forth could satisfy him that the steward was not acting for Germany, and was not using him as a tool. But he had decided upon his course. At the earliest opportunity he would see Mr. Smith, return the money, and have a definite explanation and assurances before he would consent to have

anything further to do with the vexing matter.

"What's the matter?" asked Blick, as they sat at breakfast. "You look worried."

"I—didn't sleep very well," answered John in explanation.

"Layin' awake hexpectin' the 'Un pirates to blow you up?" Blick grinned.

"No," John smiled guiltily, "I wasn't even thinking of them."

"Don't tyke them too 'ard, mate," soothed Blick with mock solemnity. "They've never 'it this old ship yet."

"I'm not even thinking of them," John snapped testily, resenting the imputation that he was afraid.

"Don't get hout of patience with me, mate," Blick apologized. "I was just 'avin' a bit of sport with you."

"That's all right," John acknowledged good naturedly. "I guess I was a little cross, but I didn't mean to be."

"We hall 'as our bad days and our good days, and our hups and downs," Blick commented philosophically. "I 'ave them myself hoften enough."

All day John awaited an opportunity to speak with Mr. Smith, but none offered. The steward seemed purposely to avoid him. That night he sat for an hour beyond the usual bedtime waiting for the steward to enter the adjoining room, but he did not come, and wearied with the previous night's wakefulness John retired, disappointed, without his interview.

"'Ow goes it, old top?" Blick in high good humor greeted him the next morning.

"Fine!" said John, though his face gave evidence that all was not right with him.

"We're in the 'unting grounds of the 'Un pirates," Blick announced, "and they 'arven't got us yet. We've made a fine voyage, and if hall goes well we'll be at the quay in Lunnon before height bells tomorrow morning. 'Ow's that, mate?"

"Why—why—" John calculated hesitatingly, "that'll be inside eight days."

"Aye," said Blick, "hinside height days! 'Ow is it, you don't happear to look pleased?"

"I—I've enjoyed the voyage so much," John explained weakly, "and I don't know

anybody in London. I like the ship and the sea pretty well."

"I'll 'arve to tyke you around and show you the sights," Blick suggested. "It's dull on a ship lying in port."

"Thank you," said John. "I'd like to see London with you."

"We'll see some of it together any'ow," Blick assured.

Blick's statement that on the following day they would be in London set John's brain awlirl. This, then, was the last day to see and talk with Mr. Smith—and to return the money. At all hazards he must have the interview. With the present uncertainty in his mind he could never go into port without the interview. And he must return the money. Nothing must prevent that. It was still unclean to him. He almost fancied, when he entered his stateroom, that a stench arose from the suit case where it was hidden. He knew this was a silly fancy, but he could not rid himself of it.

As on the previous day, the steward avoided him. Once John approached him, and said:

"Mr. Smith, may I speak with you?"

But the steward turned upon his heel, and deliberately walked to another part of the deck without a word. Blick was near and observed the maneuver.

"'E's a queer un," he grinned. "'E won't speak to 'is men. 'E's too 'igh and mighty. 'E's only a second steward, but 'e'll tyke a step down off that peg some day."

"I don't see why he did that!" said John a little angrily.

"'E thinks you want something of 'im that 'e 'asn't a mind to give you," suggested Blick, eyeing John curiously.

"He—don't know—what I want," John stammered, color rising to his forehead, as he left Blick.

John was troubled beyond measure. What he should do, if Mr. Smith would not grant an interview, he did not know. He was under promise of secrecy. If this promise had been obtained from him through fraud and false statements he was not bound by it, but he had no way to satisfy himself as to this without the interview.

At length he decided, come what might, to go to Colonel Dillingham and lay the case before the colonel. The colonel was a known and trusted officer of the British Army, and certainly no harm could arise, detrimental to the British Government, through him.

Perhaps the steward repented of his rebuff, or perhaps John's sullen face, when they met a little later, aroused his anxiety for the future. At any rate he spoke to John now most affably.

"Adney, you must pardon me for turning from you as I did a little while ago. I warned you not to speak to me except on ship's business when in public. I was certain you were going to disregard this warning, and were likely to say something that should not be heard by curious ears. A man of whom I am suspicious was watching us and was near enough to hear anything that might have been said. We are alone now. What can I do for you?"

"I must see you in my room," John answered decisively. "I must see you today. When will it be, sir?"

"Has anything happened, Adney?" the steward asked in a tone of alarm.

"No—nothing—only I must see you, sir."

"Very well, Adney, this evening. Will that do?"

The steward, though he spoke quietly, and in even tones, nevertheless could not entirely conceal a startled glance, as he observed Blick, who came limping past them.

"Yes," agreed John, "any time before bed-time will do."

A little later, when John met Blick the latter grinned:

"'Is 'ighness came off 'is 'igh 'orse and let you speak to 'im, didn't he? 'E's a queer un."

"Yes," John agreed, "he is a queer one."

As soon as he was free that evening, John shut himself in his room and waited for the steward. He was excited and nervous, but easier in mind, for he was to have his doubts quieted once and for all time. He had waited nearly an hour before he finally heard the key turn, and the door opened cautiously. Mr. Smith entered quietly as though fearful he might be heard.

"Well, Adney," he asked in a subdued voice, "what is it?"

"That money is the first thing," John answered tensely. "I can't keep it. If this isn't straight work you're asking me to do, I don't want your money, for I won't do crooked work. If it is straight, and to help our government, or the British Government which is the same, for we're fighting for the same thing, I don't want pay for it. It'll be my good turn as a scout."

"What has happened, Adney, to make you talk in this way?" asked the steward, suddenly suspicious.

"Nothing," John replied, "only I've been thinking, and I've got to have some things explained to me before I go on with it."

"What do you mean by 'straight' work?" asked Mr. Smith, as John stooping and opening his suit case drew out the roll of bills, and tendered it to Mr. Smith, who, making no move to accept it, continued: "Haven't I told you, Adney, exactly what it is? Haven't I been explicit enough?"

"Yes," replied John, "you've told me very

plainly, but I want you to explain some things to me to satisfy me. I'm not satisfied with everything I've seen, and I must be satisfied before I go any further with it."

"Adney," said Mr. Smith in an injured tone, "I've told you things I wouldn't have told anyone else in the world. I did it because I had confidence in you. I believed you were brave and trustworthy. I'm a reader of character, and I believed I could depend upon you. Don't you believe me? Do you doubt my word?"

"I—I don't know what to say," John faltered. "Take this money, Mr. Smith, and I'll tell you how I feel."

"No! I'll not take it on any account. You accepted it and you accepted the trust." The steward had suddenly hardened. "Now say what you have to say."

"It's—it's this," John hesitated. "I got thinking this thing over—and I've got to be satisfied it's—it's all right. You can't blame me for that. I got thinking of Mr. Karlstadt and those Germans you were talking with in New York. And when I went to post a letter

that night I saw you and Mr. Karlstadt go into a saloon not far from the ship. You acted as though you didn't want to be seen."

"Oh, now I see!" Mr. Smith had mellowed again, and spoke with evident relief. "I don't blame you, Adney, for being cautious. That is a good trait, and it gives me the more confidence in you. I hadn't explained, because I never explain more than I think is necessary. I see it's better for me to go into details with you, however. I know you will keep what I say to yourself, for I know you have kept everything to yourself so far.

"I'm in the Government Secret Service. I've been directed to secure certain information of vital importance to the government, and I have succeeded. I was selected for this service because I speak German well. To secure the information I've had to make friends with Germans in America, and through them get much of the information I was after. You see I have to play double with the Germans, and make them believe I am acting in the interests of Germany. I was placed here on

the *Gorgonia* by the Secret Service as a cover to my movements. Does that answer your question?"

"Yes—I see it all now," said John, vastly relieved. "That explains everything. I'm sorry if I've done you an injustice by doubting you, Mr. Smith."

"That's all right, and quite natural, Adney," Mr. Smith acknowledged magnanimously. "Now, Adney, I'm satisfied there is a man on this ship watching me. I know that my room has been searched secretly by a spy since I put the papers in your care. That proves the wisdom of my course. If I had sufficient evidence I would put him under arrest, but I don't want to make a mistake. I know that I shall in all probability be watched and possibly held up when I go ashore. I'll be able to take care of myself, so don't worry about me. But to provide for any slip, I want you to take the papers and deliver them in accordance with our arrangement. I know they will be perfectly safe with you, if you keep your nerve and poise, for no one will have the least suspicion that you have them."

"Who is it? Who do you suspect is a spy?" asked John nervously.

"It wouldn't do to tell you that," said Mr. Smith. "You might by your actions unintentionally let him know you suspected him. What is important now is for you to follow implicitly the directions I gave you the other evening. Do you understand them thoroughly?"

"Yes."

"You had better repeat them to me again to be quite sure."

John repeated them. He could never forget them while he lived.

"Very well," said Mr. Smith. "Follow those instructions, and *use the automatic if necessary*. You *must* deliver the papers at the address *and to the proper person*. If you do not your life may be the forfeit. I may say it *will* be the forfeit if you fail. There is little doubt of that. Let me say again, don't have any compunctions about using the gun if you get in a tight place. You will be protected. No matter who stands in your way, use it."

"Yes, sir, I'll do my duty, now I understand everything and that it's for my country."

"Good! That's the way to talk, Adney!" Mr. Smith arose. "Now that we've had an understanding I'll say good night and good-bye. I may not see you alone again."

"Here, take the money," and John held out the roll of bills.

"No, positively not! You are to do a dangerous service, and it is the policy of my government to pay for such service."

Without giving John an opportunity to renew his protest, Mr. Smith withdrew and closed and locked the door, and John suddenly found himself alone again with the money in his possession. But he felt differently about it now, his doubts had been explained away. The steward had apparently been straightforward and he was satisfied. While he still felt that he would have preferred to have delivered the papers as a good turn and without compensation, he had been given no choice. His compunctions vanished, John returned the bills to their former resting place in his suit case, and though highly ex-

cited at the prospect of the dangerous service before him, retired, now, with a clear conscience.

The *Gorgonia* had, indeed, made an excellent and exceptional voyage. In accordance with Blick's calculation and prediction, she turned into the Thames River early the following morning, and before twelve o'clock was at rest at her wharf.

CHAPTER IV

SURPRISED AND DISARMED

THIS was London, romantic, historic old London. In the lumber camp there had been some stray copies of Dickens, a copy of *Vanity Fair*, and a *History of the Tower of London*. John had read them, and they were still fresh in his recollection. In his imagination he had lived many exciting and pleasant evenings with Mr. Pickwick and David Copperfield and Oliver Twist, and with them had often on winter evenings visited the curious and quaint old nooks and corners of the city. And there was good, honest, plain old Dobbin, and the artful and conniving Becky Sharp who had taken him into more aristocratic society. Now he was to be in person in the land of his imagination, and the thought thrilled him and he wondered if, after all, he was not perhaps dreaming, and would

not presently awaken to find himself asleep over his book in the lumber camp.

Somewhere, too, in the pile of brick and stone and mortar that rose before him stood the somber old Tower of London from which so many of the fallen great had gone forth to lay their heads upon the block on Tower Hill. London Tower whose chambers held locked within their dismal walls so many dark secrets and mysteries! It was here that the two young sons of Edward IV, victims of ambitious men, suffered unknown tortures before they were finally put to death! What hopes and ambitions had been wrecked in the Tower since it was built by William the Conqueror, more than eight hundred years ago, upon foundations laid by Caesar! It had played an active part in the rise and fall of rulers. It had seen the birth, the growth, and the death of nations. It had actively taken part in more of tragedy and history than any other building in all the world.

Here, too, was Westminster Abbey where slept so many of the great of history! And Westminster Castle! And London Bridge!

From the days when Mother Goose had been John's favorite author, London had been to him a city of romance and wonder.

It was all strange and new and fascinating to John, and had it not been for the responsibility for the delivery of the papers, which persisted in rising before him, he would have enjoyed the experience hugely.

There was small time, indeed, for musing and romance. The ship was boarded early in the morning by officers, and passengers and crew subjected to strict inspection. Guards were stationed on the wharf. Military life and activity was paramount everywhere.

When at last the hurry and confusion of departing passengers was at an end, Blick came to John in high good humor that he was back again in his "Hold Lunnon."

"Well, mate, 'ere we are," he enthused, "and the 'Uns didn't get us. I'm going ashore to look in at my 'ome for a bit. I'll be back later, and after mess I'll tyke you for a look about the hold town."

"Thank you, Blick," John acknowledged heartily.

"Good-bye, old top," said Blick gaily. "I'm off."

John was glad that Blick was gone. They had become excellent friends, but John had his secret mission to perform, and with Blick around it might have been awkward to get away alone and unobserved.

He was nervous and excited in spite of resolutions to be composed. Unknown dangers lay before him—dangers that might cost him his life. He endeavored to fortify himself with Mr. Smith's assurance that there would be little or no danger if he kept his nerve and poise. He was anxious to have the thing done and behind him that he might breathe freely once more.

He had not seen the steward since the previous evening, though he had looked for him during the morning. He felt that if he could see Mr. Smith again for one moment it would give him renewed courage and fortitude.

When Blick had left him, John descended to his room, and proceeded at once to turn back the mattress. He had avoided looking at the place since the night when the package

was hidden. He was now rather astonished to discover the steward had not sewn the rent as neatly and carefully as he had thought. Then it had seemed to him so well done that he wondered whether he would be able to find the exact spot when the time came to remove it. But he had no difficulty in locating it. The rent in the mattress ticking was sewn carefully enough, but the fact that the place had been opened would have been obvious to the least careful observer.

But the package was there, just as it had been placed. John fingered it gingerly. It was sealed with wax in three places with a great sprawling impression that he could not decipher.

As he had been directed, he placed the envelope in the inside pocket of his waistcoat. Then he spread and re-made the bed.

The automatic was in his right hip pocket. He had carried that constantly since the evening the steward gave it to him. The knowledge of its presence had made him feel more comfortable, and he had wished to have it on his person with some vague idea that he

might be called upon to use it in case of a submarine attack. Now he drew it out and examined it carefully. It was fully loaded. He replaced it in his pocket and drew it again. This he repeated several times that he might be assured he could do so quickly if circumstances demanded.

When John mounted the deck and descended the gangway to the wharf he felt much like a soldier going under fire for the first time. His knees were weak and shaky. There were indications of a nervous chill, but he said to himself, over and over again, "A scout is brave," and the scout law helped him.

His ship's uniform passed him on the wharf and to the street. The address that Mr. Smith had printed on the card he had long since memorized. It had burned itself into his brain. He knew the place was not far away, and once free of the wharf he asked a passer-by the direction. Another inquiry, and he found himself upon the street he sought.

It was a narrow, crooked, dirty old street, and a neighborhood where anything might take place. It was ill-smelling and repulsive.

The buildings were old and weather-beaten and more or less dilapidated. This astonished John, for he had expected to find the house where government officials held forth in a smart well-kept neighborhood.

The number John sought was 132, and presently he saw the house. He had dreaded the moment when he should find it. Now he felt a shock and a throbbing in his throat. He paused for a moment on the opposite side of the street to look it over. It was, like its neighbors, old and in poor repair, and, like the street and neighborhood, disappointed him.

As he stood gazing at the old building his courage returned in a measure. No one had followed or molested him, and he was satisfied that had an attack been planned he would have been waylaid before reaching the very door where his mission was to end. This was his thought when suddenly a voice directly behind him, said quietly:

"You'd better come with me, Adney. I know all about it, and it'll save both of us some trouble if you make no scene."

John wheeled and stood face to face with 'Blick. Before he could recover from his astonishment, Blick had stepped forward and deftly removed the automatic from John's hip pocket and transferred it to a side pocket in his own coat.

"It will be safer with me," he remarked as he did so, "you might get nervous and try to use it."

Blick had lost his cockney accent and his limp. He no longer slouched, but stood straight, and was alert and businesslike.

John's first impulse was to fight. He had no doubt now that Blick was the German spy of whom Mr. Smith had spoken. But he had permitted himself to be surprised and disarmed, and Blick was master of the situation.

CHAPTER V

"T-A-K-E COVER! T-A-K-E COVER!"

"**Y**OU! You Hun spy!" John burst forth, springing away from Blick's touch in anger and abhorrence.

John had been timid and afraid when threatened by a mysterious, unknown danger by a mysterious and unknown enemy. Now that the enemy stood before him, revealed, fear gave place to anger. He had no more fear of Blick than of an antagonist on the football field or of the driving blizzard on the "tote" road. He resented the manner in which Blick had stolen upon him and disarmed him, and pent-up emotion all but overcame him.

Suddenly he thought of the papers safely tucked away in his inside waistcoat pocket. Blick was after them! He would attempt to take them from him! They were given him to deliver, as a trust, and he must protect

and deliver them at all hazards, though he had now only his bare hands as weapons.

"It will be better if you don't talk so loud," Blick suggested quietly and with a superior smile. "You might attract a crowd. I don't want to be rough with you, for I like you," he added condescendingly.

Quick as a cat, like a blast from a furnace, John sprang upon Blick. He had played football in school, and he knew how to tackle, and in an instant Blick lay sprawling in the street with John on top of him. Before Blick could recover from the surprise and overwhelming force of the attack, John had recovered the automatic from Blick's side pocket and had salvaged Blick's own pistol from another pocket. Then, rising, he commanded, as he covered Blick with the automatic:

"Get up! Don't you try to run either! If you do I'll shoot!"

Blick's nose had come into forceful contact with John's elbow and was bleeding copiously, and his face was a study in emotions as he arose.



"Get up! Don't you try to run either! If you do I'll shoot!"

"See here, Adney—" he began, dabbing at his nose with his handkerchief.

"Don't speak to me!" John blurted. "I won't talk to German spies!"

"But, Adney!" Blick protested. "This is ——"

"Shut up!" John commanded. "You march ahead of me now! I'm going to take you back to the ship and turn you over! They'll take care of you!"

A crowd was gathering, and a sullen crowd it was. John had its sympathy. He was its hero.

"Shoot the 'Un!" someone advised.

"No, tyke 'im in and 'ang 'im!" another suggested.

"Let me 'arve one charnce to 'it 'im!" beseeched still another.

Blick said no more. There was nothing to say. Meekly and quietly he walked ahead of John, and John, with the automatic at Blick's back, flushed with the excitement of his adventure and with pride in his capture, gave no heed to the calls and hectoring of the crowd. He did not even seem to be aware of

the crowd's presence, so intent was he upon his prisoner. He had no mind to permit Blick to slip away, and he was going to prove his loyalty and repay the confidence placed in him, by turning his prisoner over to Mr. Smith.

It was a strange-looking procession that turned down to the quay where the *Gorgonia* had her berth—Blick, his face smeared with blood from his still dripping nose, John, flushed and triumphant, holding the automatic threateningly at Blick's back, the sullen crowd casting gibes at the prisoner. The constantly increasing mob was halted by guards at the quay, but John and his prisoner were permitted to proceed to the ship and up the gangplank to the deck without question. Here they met Captain Markham, of the *Gorgonia*, who gazed at them for a moment in open astonishment.

"Here! Here!" he demanded. "What does this mean?"

"This is a German spy I've taken prisoner," John announced. "I want to turn him over to the second steward."

The captain all at once seemed to be convulsed with emotion. Then, suddenly, he broke into a roar of laughter.

"Ha! ha! ha! ho! ho! ho!" he roared. "This is good! A German spy, and a prisoner!"

"I'm a prisoner, anyhow, if not the other," Blick ventured quietly. "Adney captured me single-handed and unarmed, too. He's a whirlwind, Captain!"

"I want to see Mr. Smith," John demanded with dignity, resenting Captain Markham's levity, and not understanding in the least why he should treat so lightly a matter of such grave importance as the capture of a German spy.

"Come, suppose you bring your prisoner to my cabin!" the captain suggested. "Keep an eye on him, lad, and don't let him escape," he added with a guffaw.

It was quite unnecessary to caution John as to that. He had no mind to permit the escape of his prisoner, though some doubts were forcing themselves upon him as to whether or not everything was as he had supposed it to be.

He did not hold Captain Markham greatly in awe, though he held him in high respect. In the course of the voyage he had never seen the captain save at a distance, and had never before come in contact with him personally. He could not understand the captain, and it was quite natural that he should feel rather hurt and considerably piqued at his reception as he marched his prisoner, under the captain's leadership, to the cabin.

"Sit down, sit down, gentlemen," the captain invited, with an evident effort to be dignified. "Tell me about it," he continued when they were seated, "tell me how it all happened. Lad, I'm a little nervous about that pistol. It might go off and hurt somebody. Suppose you put it away. I'll vouch for the safety of your prisoner. He can't slip away with two of us to watch him, even if he hasn't got a pistol pointed at him." The twinkle in his eyes was irrepressible.

"Thank you, Adney," said Blick as John slipped the automatic into his pocket, adding, as he heaved a sigh, "I feel easier now. A man doesn't like, you know, to be forced to

pass on so suddenly that he hasn't time to repent of his sins."

"I'd like Mr. Smith, the second steward, to be here," said John, turning to Captain Markham, and ignoring Blick's remarks.

"So say we all, lad! So say we all!" The captain was serious enough now, and a little peppery in his tone. "But we can't have that pleasure. The second steward, the rascal, left us in the night or early this morning under cover of darkness. He must have dropped overboard with a life belt before we turned into the river—before daylight anyway. Likely swam ashore and got away. Hope he drowned. Maybe one of his Hun mates was waiting to pick him up in a boat. He'll be caught yet. They always get caught sooner or later, the miserable scoundrels!"

"Wasn't he—wasn't he a confidential agent for the British Government then?" asked John, experiencing a strange throbbing of the brain and a choking sensation as the truth dawned upon him.

"He was, or is," explained the captain, "one of the regular stripe of Hun spies they

have everywhere. Lieutenant Blake, your prisoner," and the captain bowed to Blick, "has been chasing him back and forth to New York for the last three months and would have had him this trip if the fellow hadn't jumped overboard this morning."

"Then I've—I've been helping—the Germans!" John's voice was filled with consternation. "I thought I was helping my country." Thrusting his hand into his inside waistcoat pocket, John drew forth the package. "Here's a package of papers he gave me to deliver at a house down there where I was this morning. I'm glad it happened as it did, Blick—Lieutenant Blake, I mean. That is, I'm glad you stopped me before I delivered them. I'm sorry I treated you the way I did."

"That's all right, Adney." Blick, or Lieutenant Blake of the British Army—as he proved to be—smiled as he looked at the blood-bedaubed handkerchief with which he was still nursing his nose. "You didn't help the Germans any, don't you know—not at all. You may keep that package as a souvenir, if

you'd like. It's some harmless stuff I put in your mattress in place of the papers the steward left for you. That was in case I was busy looking after him, don't you know, and you gave me the slip. He'd been in Colonel Dillingham's room and taken some of the colonel's papers. They were in the package and it would have been serious if they'd reached the enemy."

"How did you know about them?" asked John in amazement.

"I was watching him most of the time, don't you know," the lieutenant smiled. "I expected he would try to get you mixed up into something. I fancied that was what he brought you on the ship for, because he had no use for an extra bedroom steward. So I had a bit of a hole in the partition, and I was in the room next your's. I could see what took place through the hole and hear very well at the same time. I saw him put the papers in the mattress, and I was there again last night and heard what passed between you, and it was bally well for you I was there. If I hadn't heard it, and if you'd been caught

with the real papers on you, it would have gone hard with you. As it is, we don't question your honesty, and there'll be no trouble for you. The spy nest where you were directed to go was raided last week, and some fine fish were captured."

"I'm glad of that, and I thank you," John gulped his emotion. "And I want to apologize for treating you the way I did."

"I accept the apology." Lieutenant Blake bowed graciously to John. "That was the finest exhibition of quick thinking, quick action, and nerve I ever witnessed. I wouldn't have missed it for a great deal. You should be in the army. You'd soon be out of the ranks. If you were a British subject I'd have you enlisted today, don't you know. We need men like you."

Captain Markham must needs hear the story of John's capture of Lieutenant Blake, which the lieutenant related with some fine embellishments, not sparing himself. And as the captain listened he leaned back in his chair and roared with laughter and slapped his thigh with resounding whacks of appreciation,

and when it was finished declared it as good a story as ever he heard, and a good one on the lieutenant.

"You owe the lad a good time," guffawed the captain. "You must take him out and show him the town!"

"I was going to give him a bit of a scare and then give him a good time," said Lieutenant Blake, "when he interrupted me and took me prisoner. I was about to explain matters to him after I'd had some sport with him, don't you know, and then take him out for a look around. I relieved him of his pistol first so he wouldn't have a chance to carry out instructions the steward gave him to use it, and shoot before I could say anything. Then he jumped on me and before I knew what was happening he had mine as well as his own, don't you know. By the way, Adney, you might return my pistol."

"Here it is," said John meekly.

"Ho! ho! ho!" roared the captain. "Well wash up, Blake, and take the lad with you. You'll stay with the ship, lad, as bedroom steward. Your wages hold good."

"Thank you," acknowledged John gratefully. "What shall I do with the money the steward gave me?"

"Keep it," said Lieutenant Blake. "It's German money—that is, paid by Germany—and Germany's loss. Spoils of war, don't you know. It's yours."

"I couldn't use it!" John protested. "It's dirty blood money!"

"I wouldn't feel that way about it," Lieutenant Blake laughed.

"No, no, keep it!" the captain urged.

"I don't feel right about it," John insisted.

"If you really don't want it give it to your American Red Cross Society when you get home," suggested the lieutenant. "That's an organization that's doing a great work. But it's yours to do as you please with, don't you know."

"And this?" asked John holding up the automatic.

"It's pretty safe in your hands," the lieutenant laughed. "You didn't shoot *me*. Keep it as another souvenir."

"Thank you," said John grinning sheepishly, "I would like this."

"I think I'm all right," Lieutenant Blake, who had been washing away the blood stains, presently remarked, surveying himself in the captain's mirror. "I've washed away the traces of the battle. It was no worse than a whack of your elbow, Adney, on my nose. Come along."

"Give Adney a good time! You owe it to him!" Captain Markham called after them with a chuckle as they departed.

Lieutenant Blake conducted John to a small hotel, where he maintained a room, and when he had changed his ship's clothes for a uniform they set forth on a tour of pleasure, ending with dinner at an excellent restaurant. It was nearly nine o'clock when they emerged from the restaurant into the darkened streets.

"Suppose we walk a bit," suggested Lieutenant Blake, "then I'll take you back to the ship. You'll have trouble finding your way alone in a strange city, and it's not so easy as common, with the lights dimmed, don't you know."

Suddenly they were startled with the warning:

"T-a-k-e cover! T-a-k-e cover!"

People scurried from the streets into buildings, and John was thrilled as he recognized the uniform of the English Boy Scouts upon a lad who ran fearlessly through the streets shouting as he ran:

"T-a-k-e cover! T-a-k-e cover!"

"An air raid!" exclaimed Lieutenant Blake.
"Hear the hum of the motors?"

John listened, and above the noise of the streets he heard high up the hum of the air machines. Suddenly, they were nearly thrown from their feet by a terrific explosion. The air was filled with flying splinters and other débris. Then came an ominous silence, broken quickly by startling cries of anguish. In the distance came other crasning explosions. Searchlights began to whip the sky, and anti-aircraft guns to speak.

CHAPTER VI

THE INHUMAN HUN

IN THE interval between the explosions John heard faintly in the distance the cry, "Take cover" that had so thrilled him. The Boy Scouts were still shouting the warning through the streets, courageously exposing themselves that others might be made aware of the danger and seek safety. Oh, but they were heroes—those scouts! In the years to come our Boy Scouts of England and America will be honored as honor is due them for their self-sacrifice and noble service in a thousand ways.

"Come," said Lieutenant Blake, "we'll see what damage they've done. I fancy there'll be work for us."

A building almost directly across the street from where they stood had been bombed. The front had been blown out, and the street was

clogged with masses of broken brick walls and splintered timber.

Half way across the street Lieutenant Blake and John stumbled in the darkness over a body. Lieutenant Blake pressed the button of a pocket flash light, and revealed a young woman lying prostrate upon her back hugging to her bosom the remains of an infant child. A falling brick had crushed the baby's head into a horrible, shapeless mass. The mother was unconscious, but her arms still instinctively held the lifeless little body against her own blood-bespattered breast, protecting it to the last.

"My, God, look at this!" exclaimed Lieutenant Blake. "See what the black-hearted murderers have done!"

John was nauseated. It was horrible beyond belief. For a moment he thought he should faint.

Lieutenant Blake stooped, and gently undoing the mother's arms, lifted the child's body.

"I'll take care of this. It's a bit mussy to handle," he said quietly. "Can you carry the

woman, Adney? We'll take her to a chemist's shop just below here where they'll look after her."

"Yes," the lieutenant's words and the necessity for immediate action restored John's balance, "I can carry her."

He lifted her easily enough, for she was a slightly built little woman, and with the lieutenant guiding they picked their way by the light of the flash through the wreckage. Once the woman groaned, and it so startled John that he all but dropped her.

In the chemist's shop, which they found a few doors distant, he placed her upon an improvised couch which the chemist quickly arranged, while Lieutenant Blake carried his horrible bundle to a rear room and covered it gently with a cloth.

"Come, Adney!" commanded the lieutenant. "There's more work for us. The chemist will care for the woman until an ambulance brings a surgeon."

The woman gave signs of returning consciousness, and as they passed out of the door they heard her moan.

“My baby! Where is my baby?”

“It’s a bit hard,” said the lieutenant, as they faced toward the wreckage. John fancied there was a choking in his friend’s throat, as he added: “This isn’t war, don’t you know—it’s beastly murder.”

Tears came into John’s eyes as he thought of the little baby with a crushed head, and of the little mother who would soon learn the fate of her first-born, and the agony that would break her heart. For a long while afterward he carried with him a picture of her lying in the light of the flash light, drenched in the blood of her beheaded baby, while she folded, even in unconsciousness, the little headless body to her bosom. And often, in the days to come, “My baby! Where is my baby?” rang in his ear—the agonizing cry of the mother whose baby had been butchered.

A great rage welled up in John’s heart against the inhuman beasts who had planned this thing with devilish ingenuity, and who had perpetrated it with such devilish exactitude. He clenched his fists and his blood ran hot. He thanked God that his country had

joined the crusading hosts which were to punish and avenge such savagery and to put an end to it forever. He was proud to be an American. His country had never unsheathed her sword in any but a righteous cause. Her glorious old flag had never gone down in defeat. She would never lay down arms now until the Potsdam beast had been defeated and punished. The day of reckoning would come when the German savages would be called to account for such crimes as this he had just witnessed.

There was indeed much to be done. Lieutenant Blake took command of the rescue work, and directed John, with the assistance of some English Boy Scouts who had joined them, to render first aid to the injured. Surgical bandages were had from the chemist's shop, which was also a surgical supply shop, and John was thankful for the scout training that had prepared him for usefulness in such emergencies, for he was an adept at bandaging.

When the injured were cared for, and the ambulances arrived with surgeons to take them in charge, John joined other volunteer

rescuers in a search of the ruins for additional victims. He did not spare himself but worked with frantic energy, digging with his hands into bricks and mortar and splintered timber. The mangled bodies of three women and a man were uncovered, and a boy, still living, was found with a leg nearly severed from his body.

Day was breaking when the last of the maimed and the last ghastly, mangled body was recovered, and Lieutenant Blake said:

“Come, Adney, let us go.”

They walked silently away. John had not felt weary until now, but with relaxation from the tremendous effort he had been putting forth he staggered.

“Why, Adney, you’re done up!” said Lieutenant Blake.

“I do feel a little groggy,” John admitted.

“It was pretty hard digging for awhile.”

“We’ll stop for a bite and a cup of strong tea to brace us,” Lieutenant Blake suggested.

“I need it too. I’m a bit fagged myself.”

“Thank you,” said John. “It was sickening, wasn’t it?”

"Yes, sickening! The Hun's are desperate and cruel murderers," observed Lieutenant Blake, exclaiming, as John raised his hand to brush back a refractory lock of his red hair, "Adney, your hands are bleeding!"

John looked at his hands, and they were, indeed, bleeding. On his right hand a nail had been partly torn off, and the skin on the inside of the fingers of both hands was worn through to the naked red flesh. A look of astonishment came into his face.

"I didn't feel them before! I didn't know they were hurt!" said John. "I guess I was too busy to feel anything but sorry for the people back there."

Lieutenant Blake looked admiringly at John, but said nothing, save to suggest, casually, that they drop into a place where they could have the fingers dressed. But when they were seated at table in the restaurant where they had eaten dinner the previous evening, and were waiting for breakfast to be served, he suddenly exclaimed:

"Adney, you're a born soldier! I wish I had a regiment like you!"

"Thank you," John acknowledged, "but I don't know what kind of a soldier I'd make," he smiled. "I might run at the sound of a whistling bullet."

"No, no, you wouldn't!" the lieutenant protested. "I've seen you in action, don't you know."

"I only did what I thought was my duty," said John, adding, with some embarrassment, "I thought it was my duty to arrest you."

"I was thinking of the way you performed tonight," said the lieutenant, "but you certainly arrested me properly and I admire you for that, too, don't you know. It was corking good the way you flew at me and relieved me of the pistols."

After a light breakfast the lieutenant called a cab, and accompanied John to the *Gorgonia*.

"Good-bye, mate," said he, taking John's hand when they were parting at the wharf. "I'll be away on duty, and may not see you again, don't you know. Write me when you reach New York."

"Good-bye," said John reluctantly. "You've done a lot for me, and I want to

thank you. I'll write from New York, and I hope we'll meet again."

They were to meet again, but in another land than England, where unexpected adventures awaited them.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAN FROM ARIZONA

IN SOME manner the story of John's arrest of Lieutenant Blake, or "Blick" as he was still known and spoken of aboard ship, had reached the crew of the *Gorgonia*. Not only every man in the steward's department, but every man down forward and even in the engine-room and the firemen's quarters had heard it. It had spread from stem to stern of the ship, and when John appeared on deck he was met by good-natured grins on every side, and men who never before had noticed him now greeted him as "shipmate." Even the officers had a kindly nod of recognition for him.

Like all stories, this one, as it passed from lip to lip, had grown and expanded with several amplified versions. According to the favorite rendering Blick had suspected that John was a German spy in disguise. He had

followed John and suddenly covered him with a revolver and demanded his surrender. John, on his part deciding that Blick was a German spy, had bravely faced and disregarded the revolver, charged Blick, disarmed him, broke his nose and otherwise disfigured him by the force of a hard fist, and then marched him back to the ship a captive. Sailors, like other men the world over, admire and respect fearlessness and muscle, and John suddenly found himself vastly respected by his shipmates.

John protested that nothing so heroic had happened, that he had done nothing courageous, and was indeed so ashamed of his performances that he preferred to say nothing and have nothing said concerning the incident. But it was too good a forecastle yarn for sailormen to reject. They declined to listen to John's protests, and insisted upon believing and repeating the story with all its heroic amplifications. Men are, after all, just overgrown boys, and like boys they love heroes and the heroic.

And so it happened that before the *Gorgonia*, one evening a week later, drew out of

her wharf and again turned to sea, John had become good friends with nearly every man of the crew, and when he was not on duty was always welcome forward.

One of the sailors, a tall, lanky fellow named Henry Stevens, sometimes known as "Long Hank," but by his own preference called "Bronk," became particularly attached to John. Bronk in his younger days had been a cowpuncher in Arizona. His ranch boss had once sent him to Galveston as guardian of a train load of cattle destined for foreign shipment and his mission ended with the arrival of the cattle at the Galveston terminal of the railroad.

Bronk had never before visited a seaport, and the great steamers at the wharves fascinated him. He had "busted" many a bucking bronco, and was now curious to experience at first hand the sensation of riding a bucking ship. He was simply a typical American. His system was surcharged with the love of big, wholesome adventure, and with the American's instinctive love of change.

Bronk secured a berth in a tramp steamer.

"I was just out to see what it was like," he explained to John, "and for one voyage." He was duly seasick, and while the ship dallied in South American ports duly homesick for the range. But before the tramp returned again to Galveston he had learned to like the sea. He reshipped again and again, and was now rated an able seaman.

All this he related to John together with many highly embellished tales of personal adventure on the range and on the sea, and it was quite natural that John should seek his company and enjoy his yarns of romantic experiences real and fancied, and that presently they should become fast friends.

Fire drills were at once resumed. John was assigned to the same boat with Bronk. He had no doubt Bronk engineered this, and he was glad, for he had a vast deal of respect for the prowess and ability and courage of his new friend, and in these times no one knew what might happen. In the boat Bronk kept stowed, with the keg of water and bag of sea biscuit, a coil of rope.

"That's a good old friend," said Bronk.

"I always feel safer if I've got my lariat. That old rope has helped me out of some tight corners, and I've been plumb up against it more'n once in the course of my young and innocent life."

John smiled. What possible use Bronk thought he would ever have for a lariat in an open boat in the middle of the sea he could not imagine. Bronk himself probably had no definite idea. He clung to it on general principles.

John was glad to be going home. Little more than a fortnight had passed, but it seemed to him months, since the dreary evening when he took refuge under the Broadway coping. So much of experience and adventure had been crowded into that fortnight! He had seen the fringe of the war, and he still shuddered when he thought of that dreadful night in London.

While the ship lay at her wharf in London, John had received half the wages for the voyage, and had been told that he would be paid the balance upon his arrival in New York. No deduction was made from his

wages for the clothing the spy Smith had given him from the ship's stores. The payment for that, the chief steward said, would be deducted from money due Smith.

John had been most economical, and had spent only five dollars, chiefly in the purchase of inexpensive souvenirs. This left him twenty dollars, and with the twenty-five still due him he would have ample funds to defray his expenses to Duluth, without drawing upon the one hundred and fifty dollars given him by Smith, which he had at last been persuaded was free from taint. He had received it in good faith. It had finally been forced upon him against his will and protests. He had not been led, because of it, to commit any treasonable or dishonorable act. He now looked upon it, indeed, as a windfall. It would go far toward defraying his expenses at the State college, which he hoped to be prepared to enter in another year.

John was sitting in his room one afternoon counting his money and making these calculations, when one of the guns of the *Gorgonia* suddenly barked. He sprang to his feet and had

scarcely opened the door of his room when the vessel was shaken by an explosion that sent him sprawling into the passageway.

He was up in an instant, but before he could reach the deck the ship was listing heavily to port. The *Gorgonia* had been torpedoed and was sinking.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HUN GUNNERS MAKE A HIT

JOHN tumbled up the stairs and ran to his station. Bronk and nearly all of the boat's crew were already at their posts.

"They got us, Kid!" said Bronk, as John took his place. "They got us good and plenty too, right in our in'ards!"

Somewhere a woman was screaming hysterically. Another, guided by a lame soldier who was carrying her little girl in his arms, was sobbing quietly. Some of the men passengers were clamoring at the boats, and shouting in wild confusion. But these were the exception and for the most part men and women were keeping their heads admirably.

Captain Markham, as cool and unperturbed as though he were directing the daily fire drill and what had taken place was an ordinary occurrence, stood on the bridge issuing orders to the crew through his megaphone, and assurances to the passengers.

"Women and children first! Take your turn, gentlemen! There is no reason to get excited! There are boats enough for all! Take your turn, gentlemen!"

There were six women and four children among the passengers. These were placed in the first life boat to be launched, and with its quota of men passengers and its crew, the boat was lowered away in a jiffy.

The officers and ship's crew maintained admirable discipline, though of necessity worked with haste, for every minute was precious. The *Gorgonia* was rapidly settling in the water.

John felt strangely free from excitement. Captain Markham on the bridge, placid, cool, and unafraid was an example of courage. He heard the buzz-buzz of the wireless. The operator was at his post calling for help. John had met him—a young fellow but little older than himself—and this added example of heroic devotion to duty also served to steady his nerves as he awaited his turn.

Presently the engineers and begrimed stokers came surging up from the bowels of

the ship. There was no crowding, no undue haste. Indeed, they might have been, for all the emotion they displayed, taking part in the usual drill, only now their faces were grim and set, and they were not joking among themselves as was their custom. Here, also, was a marvelous exhibition of nerve and courage. It was good to be one of *such* a crew!

Suddenly there came the hiss of a shell overhead. Another followed quickly, and carried away some of the superstructure aft. Then another crashed into the vessel's side, barely missing one of the boats, and bursting with a smothered roar somewhere below decks.

"That's like Durango Bill, the greaser, down in Arizony," remarked Bronk. "He shot a feller up, and when the feller was dyin' he went in and kicked him. But Durango Bill got his. The boys took care of him. I reckon the boys'll take care of the Hun greasers too, soon's our outfit get's over here and has a chance at 'em."

The submarine, not content with sinking the ship and sending her crew and passengers

adrift on the sea, was shelling the *Gorgonia* and her retreating and helpless people. John could see the enemy craft plainly now, not above a quarter of a mile away — a long, gray, whale-backed thing with a hump amidships.

While he looked a tongue of flame belched from the submarine's deck, and the next instant there was an explosion a little forward of where he stood, and he saw three of the coal-begrimed stokers fall upon the deck. One had an arm blown away and his shoulder torn to bits. One rose to his feet and stood for a moment with a strange, unsteady stiffness, then fell upon his back dead. There was a great gaping red hole in his side. The third man lay upon his face and blood was running from his mouth.

John felt sick and nauseated, much as he had felt when he saw the woman and child in the light of Lieutenant Blake's flash, as they lay in the wreckage in the London street. He had scarcely realized before what the result of the bursting shells might be. Now it was brought home to him with appalling effect.

It was fortunate that all passengers were in

boats that had been launched and were pulling away before the bombardment began, else panic might have ensued. The boat to which John was assigned, was held with one other for the wireless operator, stokers, and other members of the crew who came from below and were late in reaching the deck.

The great hulk of the *Gorgonia* was sinking rapidly. Already her bow was awash and she was preparing to take the plunge to her final resting place at the bottom of the sea.

Captain Markham was descending from the bridge. All hands had been accounted for. Orders came now to lower away. The boat was quickly in the water, followed by the other, which was the last to leave the ship, and which had awaited Captain Markham. The crews bent to their oars and had scarcely reached a safe distance when the *Gorgonia*, with a mighty sigh and rush of waters, was swallowed by the waves.

"There goes the good old cayuse," said Bronk, "and along with her the pore fellers the murderin' Huns killed."

Even now the merciless gunners of the sub-

marine did not cease firing. Shell after shell sent the water spouting among the retreating boats. One exploded so near the boat that carried the women and children that a piece of shrapnel shattered an oar blade. It was not above six fathoms from John and he heard the sailor who had held the oar utter a mighty oath.

"They're worse than the Indians ever were in the old days!" exclaimed Bronk. "The Indians couldn't have done worse than that!"

"Your Hindians stood up and fought like men!" declared the boatswain, who was in command of the boat and held the tiller, "but these cowards would show their tail if a harmed vessel 'ove in sight. Their game is to butcher women and children and unarmed men, in cold blood!"

"They'd 'erd us up and stick us like pigs!" said a sailor. "They'd cut hour throats just to see the blood run!"

"Why carn't they let us alone, now they've sunk the ship?" another complained.

"They're pirates, that's why, and when they're caught they hought to 'ang like

pirates!" the boatswain exploded, spitting vindictively into the sea. "Hit's against hall rules o' fightin' among civilized folk."

"They're coming closer!" said John. "See? They're a good deal closer than they were. What are they up to?"

"Lord knows!" said one of the sailors. "They'd like to sink us for the fun o' seein' us drown."

"They'll have to hurry," suggested the wireless operator. "I got an answer to my call. The destroyers'll be after this fellow pretty soon. They're not far away."

"There comes one now!" the boatswain broke in. "There's 'er funnel."

They looked, and on the horizon lay the funnel of an approaching vessel, every instant growing larger as the destroyer bore down upon them at top speed. Then came another and still another.

"Three," remarked the boatswain, with satisfaction. "They'll take proper care o' the pirate."

But whether the submarine had failed to discover the approaching destroyers, or

whether she believed she still had ample time to spare before submerging and covering her position, she continued firing upon the boats and following them at slow speed. A shot cut the water just in front of the boat, which caused the boatswain to swerve sharply to the right.

"If they keep at it the blighters are likely to sink us hall before 'elp gets 'ere," said the boatswain. "I don't like to 'ave them shoot so close."

"They shore are bad though on drawin' a bead," observed Bronk. "Maybe they're calculatin' on takin' some of us prisoners, they're bearin' down on us, but I'm not calculatin' on bein' took prisoner by any Hun. I reckon I'll get my rope ready. Pass her to me, Kid. She's under the deck for'ard."

John reached the rope, and handed it to Bronk, who stopped rowing long enough to fasten it to his belt.

"A rope's a handy thing to have sometimes," he observed, "when there's no tellin' what's goin' to happen."

"See 'im now with 'is rope!" remarked the

boatswain jestingly. "What do you think you'll do with hit, Bronk?"

"There's no tellin'," Bronk answered good naturedly. "That old rope's got me out of more'n one tight place."

"'E's planning to get a line on the submarine and tow 'er in as a prize," suggested a seaman.

"Will we hall 'arve a share in the prize money, Bronk?" another asked.

"She'll make a fine prize and we'll hall be rich," laughed the man rowing on the forward seat with Bronk.

"Maybe she won't be any use and maybe she will," said Bronk, still keeping his good nature and disregarding the teasing. "I'll have her handy anyhow if anything turns up I can use her for."

In an effort to escape the attention of the submarine, the boatswain had swung the boat in a circle, and it was now nearly over the spot where the *Gorgonia* had gone down, and John observed that the sea was strewn with flotsam, a ghastly record of the tragedy that had taken place. Temporarily the maneuver

had proved successful, and for several minutes the attention of the submarine gunners had been centered upon the other unfortunates.

"They've made a 'it!" the boatswain announced. "Hit's 'orrible! 'Orrible!"

"Who did they 'it?" asked one of the seamen.

"Hit's 'ard to make out, but hit looks like number two boat," said the boatswain.

"That one was filled with passengers too," observed the seaman.

Then came a deafening crash. John felt himself hurled backward, and a moment later he was struggling in the sea. Another Hun shell had found its mark and made a hit.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIGHT ON THE RAFT

JOHN was dazed by the shock of the explosion, but he instinctively struck out. His left shoulder pained him horribly, and his left arm was helpless; but he was a powerful swimmer, and even with the handicap of one useless arm, handled himself well in the water. Confused and scarcely realizing what had happened, he looked for the boat as he arose to the surface. It had disappeared, but two men were swimming near him, and he recognized them as Bronk and a seaman named Lambert. These two had manned the forward oars in the life boat.

"Be you hurt, Kid? Did they get you?" Bronk asked with concern as he discovered John.

"I guess not—much—just a little in one arm—and—a little shaken up!" John gasped. "Are you hurt Bronk?"

"Nope! Not me! They ain't got me yet! How be you on the swim, Kid?"

"I can swim."

"How be you, Lambert?" Bronk asked of the sailor.

"Hi'm not so bad. Hi can swim a bit," Lambert answered.

"There's some floatin' stuff! Make for it!" directed Bronk, indicating some wreckage that offered support as a raft.

Fortunately the wreckage was near, and though the effort was painful, John succeeded in reaching it directly behind Bronk and Lambert.

"Why, Kid, you *are* hurt!" exclaimed Bronk, who was already on the wreckage, and reaching for John drew him out of the water. "You shore are hurt!"

"'E's 'it in the shoulder," broke in Lambert sympathetically.

John was faint with the pain of the wound, and he sat down limp and exhausted upon the raft. Blood was oozing through a jagged rent in his coat.

"I guess it isn't very bad," he said in a mo-

ment. "I'm feeling better. It doesn't hurt so much when I don't move."

"Well," said Bronk, who was scanning the sea, "we're all better off than the other pore fellers that was with us, and I reckon we'll be safe here till we're picked up."

"Hit was a miracle we weren't killed too," observed Lambert. "The shell must 'ave 'it the boat aft."

"Were the others killed, then?" asked John, horrified at the thought that death had so suddenly fallen upon the companions with whom they were talking but a few minutes before.

"Yes," answered Lambert solemnly, "they were hall done to death by the 'Un shell."

"Leastways none of 'em seem to be afloat," added Bronk, who was still looking out over the sea where the boat was destroyed. "It shore does appear like we're the only ones left."

"The bo's'n — and the wireless operator — were they killed?" asked John, shocked by Bronk's statement and still hardly able to comprehend the extent of the calamity.

"Aye, them and all the rest," said Bronk, "and we was lucky even if you did get hit in the shoulder by a piece of shrapnel. But they pretty near got you right, Kid."

"If mother were living she'd say it was Providence, not luck, that saved us," said John reverently. "She used to say there's no such thing as luck, and I guess she was right. She most always was."

"It looks like she is," Bronk acknowledged, "and if there ain't no such thing as luck, and it's the doin's of the Almighty, He did a fine job for us three that was for'ard. We're all that's left. One of the other boats was hit too, and it looks like everybody in that boat was wiped clean out."

"How awful!" exclaimed John, closing his eyes as he offered a little silent prayer to God for sparing his life, and asking Him to spare the other unfortunates.

"There comes the pirate!" exclaimed Bronk suddenly.

The submarine had ceased firing, and John and Lambert looking in its direction discovered that it was bearing down upon them.

"There are only two of 'er crew on deck," said Lambert presently.

"She's gettin' ready to dive," suggested Bronk. "The destroyers are comin' too close for her health. She seems to want somethin' of us though before she dives, the way she's comin' this way."

"What 'ave we got that she wants?" asked Lambert. "We only 'ave hourselves."

"Maybe it's us she's after," suggested Bronk. "Maybe she'd like to have some prisoners to torture. They's no tellin' what they may be up to, and I'm goin' to be ready for 'em."

Bronk disengaged his lariat from his belt, and drawing a big revolver from somewhere in his clothes, poked it inside the band of his trousers in front with the handle protruding and within easy reach. No one spoke. John sat on the raft, while Bronk and Lambert stood watching the submarine, Bronk swirling his rope as though toying with it. When the submarine was within a hundred feet of the raft, one of the two men on her deck demanded in very good English:

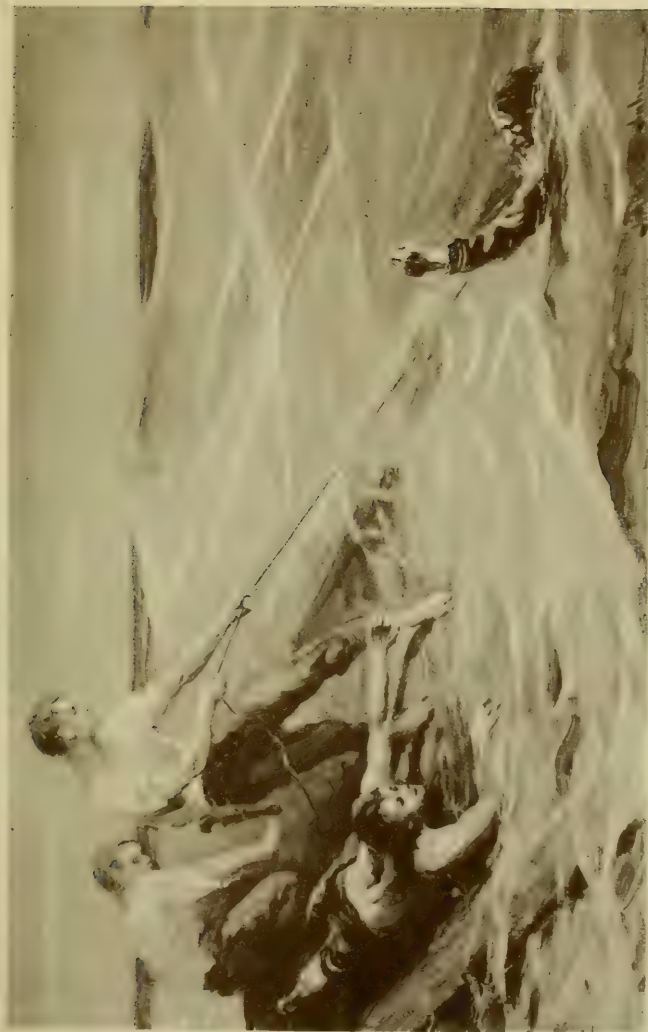
"Where is your captain?"

"I reckon you know as much about that as we do," answered Bronk. "Like's not you murdered him along with some of the other pore folks you killed."

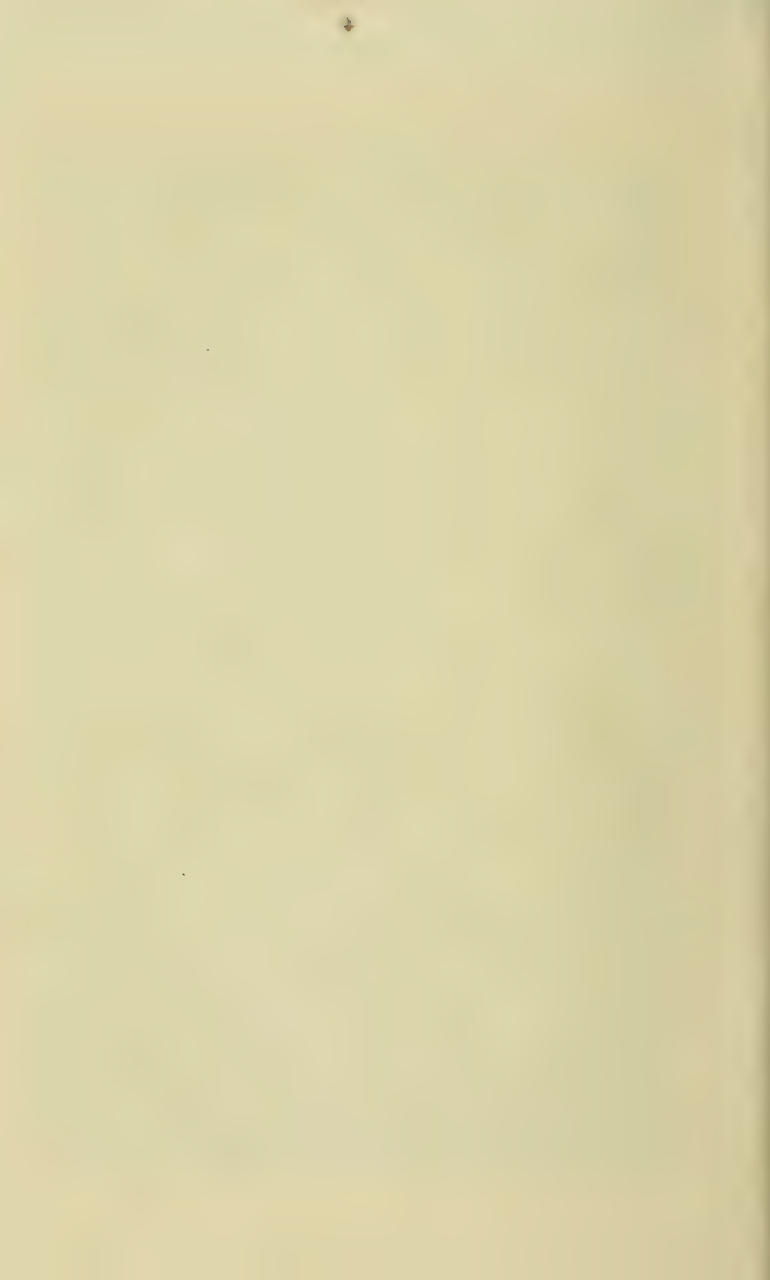
"None of your impudence!" the officer shouted angrily, at the same time displaying in a threatening manner an automatic. "Answer my question! We've no time to waste!"

"I reckon you hain't. I reckon you've wasted too much time now for your health," said Bronk coolly, glancing toward a fast approaching destroyer.

The German followed Bronk's glance. He appeared not to have observed the proximity of the destroyer. The two men scrambled excitedly toward the hatch, the one bellowing orders in German. The submarine was passing the raft now at a distance of perhaps twenty feet. Bronk was swinging the rope above his head. Suddenly out shot the loop, and before the German who had resented the "impudence" was aware of Bronk's design the loop settled over his body, Bronk gave a mighty jerk, and the surprised German offi-



Bronk proceeded to pull in the spluttering German as he would have hauled in a big fish



cer went headlong into the sea. With a wild whoop, Bronk proceeded to pull in the rope with the spluttering German at the end of it, as he would have pulled in a big fish.

The other German, who was in the act of descending into the submarine, reappeared and began shouting and gesticulating. Suddenly he drew his automatic and opened fire upon the raft.

They were at close range, and Bronk, holding the rope on the other end of which the lassoed German struggled in the water, was taken completely by surprise. The German in desperation was bent upon killing them and releasing the captive officer before submerging to escape the approaching destroyer.

CHAPTER X

HOG TYING A PIRATE

LAMBERT threw himself flat upon the raft to escape the whistling bullets, shouting the warning, as he did so:

"Lie down, mates! 'E'll shoot you! Lie down!"

A bullet plunked into the plank close to John, and he instinctively dodged. The next instant he saw Bronk stagger a step backward, partially sink upon the raft, regain his balance, and transfer the rope, which still held his captive, to his left hand. His right hand dropped to his belt, and with the same movement his revolver flashed. He appeared to take no aim, but the German crumpled up and fell down the hatchway, and the submarine immediately submerged.

"He got me in the laig, but I got him better than that," observed Bronk, not in the

least excited as he returned the revolver to his waistband. "I reckon that Hun'll never be useful to his pirate crew again in murderin' innocent folks."

"You 'it 'im 'ard!" exclaimed Lambert, scrambling to his feet, now that immediate danger was past.

"And I've got another one here," said Bronk, grinning broadly as he drew the sputtering German to the edge of the raft. "Lend me a hand, Lambert, and we'll see what the animal looks like."

Lambert went to Bronk's assistance, and together they drew their prisoner upon the raft, as angry and defiant as a wet and bedraggled German could be when he scrambled to his feet and stood before them. Ignoring the uncomplimentary language which the prisoner with marked fluency bestowed upon him, Bronk looked the man over critically, for a moment, in silence, much as he might have looked at a horse or a steer in judging its qualities.

"What do you think of it?" Bronk grinned, turning to Lambert. "I call it a pretty or-

nery-looking cayuse, about the meanest I ever roped."

"Hi don't call it 'uman," said Lambert seriously.

"I've roped plenty of cayuses that were wilder'n this ornery thing when we brought 'em in," observed Bronk, still grinning. "I reckon it'll be plumb easy to break it."

The German, now quite beside himself with rage, poured upon Bronk, in excellent English, a vile stream of invectives, which had, however, no noticeable effect upon Bronk's temper.

"I reckon," said Bronk presently, addressing the prisoner, "I'll treat you the way pirates were treated in the good old days when they knew how to handle white-livered skunks like you. I reckon I'll make you walk the plank pronto. You ain't fit to associate on the same raft with white folks. I'll just have you walk over into the water and sort of shift for yourself with the pore folks you've killed today."

The attitude of the German changed at once. Fear took the place of defiance.

"*Kamerad!*" he exclaimed. "That would be inhuman——"

"You miserable coyote!" broke in Bronk. "A baby killer like you talkin' about bein' inhuman!"

"It is too bad we have to kill people, but it is war," plead the German in extenuation. "It is hard, but I have only done my duty to my country. I must fight my country's enemies."

"He calls killin' women and children and unarmed folks 'fightin' his country's enemies'!" exclaimed Bronk in fine contempt. "What do you say, Kid? Shall we make this animal walk the plank? Or would it be better to hog tie it and keep it to be hung proper? What do you say, Lambert?"

"Tie 'im and tyke 'im 'ome to be 'ung," advised Lambert.

"Turn him over to the authorities," said John, whose wound had become exceedingly painful, and who was now lying at full length on the raft. "You'd better tie him good and tight though, for he has no honor and you couldn't depend upon his word. He's likely

got a gun too, and he'd kill us if he had a chance."

"I reckon you're right, pardners," agreed Bronk with a grin, as he proceeded to relieve the German of an automatic, and to tie him as he would have tied a calf, a proceeding to which the German objected strenuously, declaring that it was not necessary to tie him, that prisoners of war were not treated in that fashion, and that it was "brutal," to all of which Bronk paid not the least attention.

"That's the way we hog tie yearlings to brand 'em," observed Bronk, surveying his work, "only it would be slanderin' cattle to class him with 'em. I reckon I'd like to brand this animal, only I hain't got any hot irons here. Maybe they'll let me do it when we get him ashore."

"They'll never let you brand the blighter with 'ot irons!" Lambert protested, shocked at the suggestion and taking Bronk seriously.

Bronk's trousers leg was drenched with blood, and now that his prisoner was attended to to his satisfaction, he sat down and surveyed the bloodstained leg.

"Why, Bronk," John exclaimed, "you're pale! Your leg is bleeding badly! You've been hit hard!"

"My laig is gettin' sore, and the blood runnin' away makes me feel a little squeamish—sort of weak," Bronk admitted.

"Let me look at it and see if I can't help you," John plead. "I'm sure I can fix it up for you so it'll stop bleeding and feel easier, and I know how to bandage pretty well."

"Nope!" Bronk protested decisively. "You lay still. You ain't in no shape to fuss with me. I'm all right till we're picked up, and they'll do that pretty quick. Anyway 'tain't nothin' much. I don't mind this."

The destroyers had arrived. Two of them were devoting themselves to rescuing the passengers and crew of the *Gorgonia*, while the third was dropping depth bombs, feeling for the submarine, and the men on the raft turned their attention to her operations while they awaited relief.

CHAPTER XI

"WE'RE IN THE FIGHT, KID!"

"**T**HEY'VE bombed 'er!" Lambert presently announced. "They found 'er and 'it 'er!"

"Fine! That's fine, now!" exclaimed Bronk.

"See the hoil and flotsam from 'er!" Lambert pointed excitedly to a smear of oil spreading over the surface of the sea, and to numerous small objects rising to the surface. "That's the hend of that pirate!"

"I'm glad of that! I'm glad they got her!" John, also quite excited, defied the pain of his wound to rise to his feet and stand with Bronk and Lambert that he might better watch the operations of the destroyer. "She'll never kill any more people or sink any more ships," he added.

"You *bet* she won't!" and Bronk, who had quite forgotten his wounded leg, gave a wild

and joyful whoop. "Kid," he shouted, "the destroyer's a Yankee boat! We're in the fight, Kid! Our navy's on the job! Whoop-la!"

Bronk restrained his enthusiasm for a moment, then he burst out:

"It's our boat, Kid! do you know that? It's *our* boat! And ain't it good to see it! She's smashed the pirate plumb to pieces, and she blew up her whole pirate crew!" He glanced at the captive German, and added: "All exceptin' the one we've got here, and he'll have a good-and-plenty comin' to him."

The German writhed, and opened his mouth as though to speak, but apparently thinking better of it, said nothing. Perhaps he was asking himself what explanation he could ever make to his government if he were one day exchanged and returned to Germany. How could he account for the fact that he lived while his vessel was lost? Would they give credence to his story that he had been caught by a rope held by a seaman standing on a piece of wreckage, and jerked from the deck of his submarine? It would be a fantastic story indeed, and difficult to believe by

any who had not seen the performance. Perhaps he felt that, after all, he had better have gone down with the submarine or even walked the plank as Bronk had threatened to force him to do.

"And this one, I take it," Bronk looked at the German scornfully, "was the boss pirate of the outfit."

"You pigs! I'll not permit you to refer to me as a pirate, or to my vessel as a pirate vessel!" the officer exploded, unable longer to restrain his anger. "I am an officer in the German Navy, and I demand the respect due me!"

"Hear it bleat," Bronk grinned. "Awhile ago it whined."

The destroyer, which proved indeed to be a United States war vessel, having completed its work so far as the submarine was concerned, turned its attention now to rescuing the survivors of the *Gorgonia*. The raft and its occupants had been observed, and swinging about the destroyer launched a boat. An ensign was in command of the boat, and as it approached the raft, he inquired:

"What have you 'here?"

"Two wounded Yanks, one perfectly whole British seaman, and the boss pirate of the gang you just bombed," Bronk announced proudly.

"How did you get him?" the ensign asked in astonishment, as the boat made fast to the wreckage and he sprang nimbly upon it and looked down at the German captive.

"Roped him," grinned Bronk. "He ran his sub close in lookin' for trouble, standin' out in plain sight sayin' we were impudent and things, and we just dropped a rope over his shoulders and hauled him in and gave him all the trouble he wanted."

"I demand to be untied and released from this position!" broke in the German. "I am an officer in the German Navy, now a prisoner of war, and I demand to be treated as a prisoner of war and with the respect due my rank!"

"You're my prisoner and I hain't no war. I'm a ex-cowpuncher," Bronk grinned, and turning to the ensign he explained: "It's just a animal I've got tied up."

"Put him in the boat and don't untie him,"

the ensign directed with a smile, adding as two seamen lifted the German into the boat much as they would have handled a bag of meal: "When we get him aboard the captain can have him untied if he chooses."

"Oh, shore!" agreed Bronk.

"Young man, you've been hit, I see," said the ensign, turning to John. "Can you get into the boat without help?"

"Yes," said John, "I can climb in alone. I guess it isn't much of a hurt — just knocked my arm out a little."

"Did you see any other submarine?" the ensign inquired of Bronk. "They usually work in pairs."

"Nope," Bronk answered, "this one seemed to be ridin' alone."

They were away in a jiffy, and as the boat pulled for the destroyer, the ensign remarked:

"Ex-cowpuncher, you've been wounded too."

"One of the pirates winged me. It ain't much," Bronk explained, adding with satisfaction, "but I got him shore enough. He tumbled into the sub's hold before she dove."

"No one would ever have thought of attacking a submarine with a rope and revolver but an American cowpuncher," the ensign laughed.

"Why, there wa'n't any other way to do it," said Bronk seriously. "We're all that's left of our boat's crew. They shelled us after we took to the boats."

"That's their method," observed the ensign, drawing his lips into a straight line. "Did they sink any of the other boats?"

"One we know about—maybe more. We couldn't see all that was going on," said Bronk.

The ensign said no more, but his compressed lips indicated his thoughts. The boat was quickly hoisted on the davits of the destroyer, and she steamed away to join her companions who were picking up the scattered boats, and to assist in the rescue work.

The ship's surgeon met them, and directed John and Bronk to follow him to his office. Bronk tarried, however, to speak with the captain, and as John left with the surgeon he heard Bronk delivering to the captain a lurid opinion of the German officer he had

captured and of Germans and their submarines in general.

An examination of John's shoulder revealed a jagged and painful, but not, apparently, serious wound. The loss of blood had left him weak. The surgeon dressed the wound, and before sending John away with his assistants to be put to bed, he remarked:

"There may be some splinters of shell in there. I'll have to look for them, but not now. Get some rest and settle your nerves. There'll probably be other cases for me to fix up today."

"Thank you," said John.

As John was leaving the surgeon's office Bronk came limping in with his lariat.

"They took the rope off the pirate," he announced with a grin, "but they locked him up and he ain't gettin' much of the respect he thinks he ought to have. None you can notice."

The following morning they gave John no breakfast, and early in the forenoon he was placed under an anesthetic while the surgeon operated upon his wound.

CHAPTER XII

IN A FRENCH HOSPITAL

WITH his first conscious moment John fancied himself in his old home and in his bed in Duluth. But as the haze began gradually to clear from his brain he remembered that he had gone far from home—that he had gone to sea in a ship. *Gorgonia*—that was her name. Then a confused medley of unhappy experiences pressed themselves upon him—Smith the spy—Blick—the explosion—the woman with the headless body of her baby in her arms—a boy with a crushed leg—submarines and other explosions—men swinging lariats and catching fish that proved to be Germans—and much shooting.

As one slowly awakening, he opened his eyes a little. It was night. In the dim light of an electric bulb a woman wearing a white cap was leaning over him and he was conscious that she held his pulse.

"What has happened? Where am I?" he tried to ask, but he could scarcely form the words, his lips were so dry and felt so strange.

Suddenly he became very sick and was overwhelmed with nausea. The woman attended to his needs, and vaguely he thought how gentle she was in her ministrations, and how soothing her words were, as she bent over him.

After his fit of nausea John felt better, though exhausted, and he lay very still with his eyes closed. He was tired, and it was pleasant to rest—if only his head did not feel so big and strange.

And lying there he had time to marshal from the recesses of his still dazed brain a summary of events. He remembered them as one remembers a dream—the explosion on the *Gorgonia*—the rush for the boat deck—the launching of the boats—the horrible spectacle of the murdered stokers—the shelling of the boats—the raft—his own wounded shoulder—and then the destroyers and the surgeon. It was all quite plain to him now. He had been placed under an anesthetic, and

this was the return to consciousness. In a disconnected and more or less disinterested way he wondered what the surgeon had found in his shoulder.

He opened his eyes again, and looking about him realized that he was no longer on shipboard. This puzzled him. The nurse smiled encouragingly, and he asked:

"Where am I?"

"You are in a hospital at Brest in France," the nurse explained. "You are wounded, but you are doing nicely and you will soon be well again. You must keep very quiet for a little while and obey orders. Now go to sleep."

When John again opened his eyes it was broad day. Sunshine was streaming through a window. The nurse was approaching his bed, and she smiled when she saw he was awake.

"You've had a good long sleep," she greeted. "Aren't you hungry? I've just come to ask if you'd like something to eat?"

"Thank you, I would, and a drink of water, please," John answered. "I believe I'm as hungry as a bear."

"We can't let you have as much as we'd give a bear to eat," she smiled as she poured him a glass of water, "but I'll bring you something nice. Are you quite comfortable?"

"Yes, except my shoulder feels lame," said John.

"That'll soon be better," she assured. "You must lie quietly though, for a little while, and not try to move."

John's head was clear now, and he recalled vividly what had occurred previous to the time when the surgeon administered the anesthetic. But then he was at sea in a destroyer. Now he was in a hospital in France. How this had been brought about was still a mystery to him.

While John was thinking of these things he looked about him. On either side were long rows of cots. As he turned his face to the left, the man in the adjoining cot greeted him:

"Hello, Kid! Comin' around? How's your busted shoulder?"

It was Bronk, and all the sunshine in the room could not have brought to John the com-

fort and joy of that good-natured face beaming at him, or the sound of that rugged American voice.

"Why, hello Bronk!" he greeted. "Have they got you here too? My shoulder is a little lame, thank you, but I guess it's coming all right."

"Yes," grinned Bronk, "I'm in the corral along with you. They dug a bullet out of my laig, and told me I'd have to keep off the range for a little while, and quit ridin' till it's healed. It ain't busted bad though."

"How'd we get here?" asked John. "The last I knew we were on the destroyer."

"That's easy," said Bronk. "The doctor put you to sleep with something, and then pried a coupla pieces of Hun iron out of your shoulder. The destroyers were runnin' into this port with the *Gorgonia* people they picked up, and they gave you dope enough so you kept asleep till they carried us up here to the hospital from the ship."

"How many were killed by the submarine?" asked John.

"Besides the three stokers that you know

about, all that were in our boat except Lambert and you and me," said Bronk, "and I don't see how we got off. They knocked the bow off one of the other boats too. Four pore fellers were killed and some were hurt. The other boats picked up them that wa'n't killed."

John was silent a moment, and then he mused aloud:

"I wonder if Deacon Frisbee was right?"

"What was that you was remarkin'?" asked Bronk.

"I was thinking of what old Deacon Frisbee said once," explained John. "He was a neighbor of ours out home in Duluth, and came in sometimes evenings to talk with father and mother. He said the Almighty created everything and everybody for some purpose, and he never let a person die until that person had done the work on earth he had been created to do. He said as long as a man's life was spared the Almighty still had some useful work for him to do in the world."

"I don't know anything about this here Deacon Frisbee," said Bronk, "but there's a tarnal lot of folks livin' that don't 'pear to

be much use to themselves or anybody else, and if they're helpin' the Almighty, He's the only one that knows it. The rest of us can't make out how they're doin' it. And there are some good folks taken away. There's our bo's'n gone now—as good a seaman as ever walked a deck. And the wireless feller, and the rest. I do say though that the Almighty helps folks out of tight places sometimes, the way you said when we climbed on the wreckage. It looked like that was what pulled us out.

“I don't agree nohow with everything that's been created bein' useful. Where do bedbugs, and mosquitoes, and sidewipers, and such like varmints come in? Just ask this here Deacon Frisbee about *that*.”

“I wasn't thinking about those things.” John grinned broadly, adding solemnly, after a moment's silence. “I was feeling thankful I was spared to live, and wondering whether I was spared because the Almighty had something worth while for me to do in the world.”

“Well, I reckon it's up to you,” said Bronk. “It's a good way anyhow for a feller to start

out—believin' he's in the world to do something big. The bigger a feller thinks the bigger he does, mostly. The feller that goes punchin' cows never expectin' to do anything else, and bein' satisfied with that, just punches cows all his life. The feller that goes at it expectin' to own a ranch some day, gets to be ranch boss anyhow, and like as not he gets his ranch. The feller that goes to sea expectin' to stay down in the fo'c's'l, stays there. But if he goes to sea expectin' to be master some day, he gets to be mate anyhow, and like as not ends up master, and I might say liker than not. The feller that thinks little, is little and does little mostly. The feller that thinks big, and puts some ginger in it and don't take it all out in thinkin', is the feller that gets there. Them's *my* observations."

The reappearance of the nurse cut short Bronk's philosophy, and for the present John had far greater interest in the poached egg, a thin wafer of toast and a cup of chocolate on the tray which the nurse bore to his bedside than in Bronk's "observations."

"You two were talking, and the doctor pre-

scribed quiet for this young man," she said with a good-natured shake of her head, as she placed the tray on a table and proceeded to prepare him for his breakfast.

"He wa'n't sayin' much," answered Bronk. "He was about as quiet as an old cow layin' down and chewin' her cud. I was doin' the gabbin' and I didn't calculate it would do him any hurt, seein' I'm his pardner, and we was mates on the ship the pirates blew up. You see he's the only feller I can talk to. There's a Frenchy the other side of me, and he just grins and says, '*oui, oui*,' when I talk to him, and he don't understand a dinged thing I say."

"When the doctor comes he may let you talk as much as you like," laughed the nurse, "but you must be quiet until the doctor gives his permission. I'm sure he'll give it, you're both doing so nicely."

"All right," grinned Bronk, "I'll reef my sails and lie to."

John enjoyed his breakfast to the utmost, but he declared when he had finished that he was still nearly as hungry as ever, and that

he had only had sufficient to tantalize his appetite.

"You're doing so splendidly," said the nurse, "that I'm sure we can let you have more pretty soon. And I'm sure you'll soon be well, for your wound isn't in the least serious."

"Thank you," John acknowledged. "May I ask your name before you go? I am John Adney, from Duluth, in the United States."

"I'm Miss Bigelow, and I'm glad you are an American. I was sure you were," she smiled. "I'm an American too—a volunteer Red Cross nurse, and I've been in France only a month."

"Between you and Bronk," said John, "I'll feel almost at home."

"I'm sure you will. But we mustn't talk now. Be quiet till the doctor comes. It won't be long," and she gathered up the tray and left him.

It was an hour later when the doctor, accompanied by another nurse, reached John's cot. John had been dozing comfortably since breakfast, and he opened his eyes to see the

doctor, a big, jolly-looking man, unmistakably an American, bustling up.

"How you feeling this morning, young man?" he greeted. "Fine and dandy?" without waiting for an answer, he continued as he consulted the history card, "'*Gorgonia* victim. Shrapnel flesh wound in shoulder.' How do you like being blown up?" The doctor took his pulse in his fingers. "How did you say you were feeling?"

"I'm feeling pretty well, thank you," said John.

"That's good! No temperature. Increase his diet, nurse. Feeling pretty well, eh? Not much harm done! The Hun's were easy with you this time! Look out for 'em though! You'll be up in a week and in three weeks won't know you were ever hurt. You look like an outdoor chap."

"I am," said John proudly. "I've been in the lumber woods."

"Good! Good!" exclaimed the doctor. "That's why you're pulling out of this scrape so nicely. Nothing like the outdoors to keep in trim! Able to meet the shock and recover

where another would have died! Builds reserve power. Where do you hail from?"

"Duluth, Minnesota," answered John.

"Duluth! I'm from St. Paul! Fine state and Duluth's a fine old town! Let me see," and he referred to the card again, "John Adney. I used to know a William Adney. Class ahead of me in college. State University."

"My father's name was William," said John, "and he went to the State University."

"Well! well! Upon my soul!" the doctor's face glowed. "If you're Bill Adney's boy you'll pull through anything and always land on top, if you're anything like him! He captained our eleven, and he was a hummer!"

"My father was captain of the football team," said John.

"Then it's the same!" the doctor beamed. "Does he know where you are?"

"No," John answered soberly, "he's dead."

"Dead! Bill Adney dead! And I never heard of it! I'm sorry, lad! Sorry!" and there was sympathy in his voice. "I'll have to look after you, lad. I'll be back to see you again as soon as I make my rounds. Let

me know if you need anything. I'm Doctor Gregory."

"See here, Doc," Bronk grinned as the doctor turned to his cot and proceeded to examine the dressing on his leg, "the nurse told me to reef my sails and quit talkin' to the kid, because he had to be quiet. We were shipmates and pardners when we hauled in the Hun pirate. Can I unfurl now? You said he was comin' all right."

"Unfurl! Go to it!" said the doctor. "Keep each other company. Visit all you want to. Flesh wound in leg! You'll soon be around, but keep in bed and off the leg," he added as he passed on.

It was nearly two hours later when Doctor Gregory's broad shoulders, topped by his jovial bronzed face, appeared again at the door of the hospital ward. As he came breezing down the aisle between the cots, dropping words of encouragement here and there to the men who occupied them, and exuding good spirits, John instinctively associated him with the wholesome atmosphere of the broad lakes and open wilderness of his own state.

"Here I am just for a minute! Awful busy! Wish I had time for a real visit, but they keep us doctors busy! Tell me about your father."

John told simply of his father's death and the conditions that had thrown him upon the world; of his experience on the ranch and in the lumber camp; of his plans to re-enter school and work his way through the university, when the war ended.

"That's your father over again! Never give up! Go for a thing and stick at it till you win out!" the doctor beamed. "But your father was supposed to have had enough to provide for his family. We used to think he was better off than most of us, and he was a good manager. I can't understand it."

"Neither can I," John admitted.

"When the war is over and we get back home we'll look into it. I remember reading something in the newspapers about Squibb, the Duluth lawyer. It was some questionable transaction, but I don't recall the details. Can't understand your father trusting him with his affairs. How are you off? Got any money?"

"I've—got some in the bank in Duluth," John hesitated.

"That won't do you any good here. Got any money with you?"

"No, sir. It went down with the ship," John confessed.

"You'll need some when you get out of here. I'll see you through. Call on me for what you need."

"Thank you, Doctor, but I never borrow," John declared positively. "It's mighty good of you to offer it, but I'll get a job on a ship and make out all right."

"That won't do! Won't do at all!" Doctor Gregory protested. "See you tomorrow. Don't worry now. We'll see you through."

Bronk, who had been sleeping, awoke to hear Doctor Gregory's last assurance, as the doctor strode away.

"What's he seein' you through?" asked Bronk inquisitively.

"Just cheering me up," said John noncommittantly. "Thinks I need cheering."

CHAPTER XIII

VOLUNTEERS FOR THE AMBULANCE SERVICE

“**H**E’S a great old Doc,” observed Bronk. “Makes a feller feel good just to look at him. His laugh would cure sick folks even if he never gave ’em pills.”

“He certainly is great,” John agreed. “Isn’t it strange I should meet anyone here that knew my father?”

“Yes, ’tis funny the way folks turn up sometimes,” said Bronk. “Maybe it’s another case of the Almighty steppin’ in.”

“Maybe. Bronk, do you realize how fortunate we were in getting out as we did? We might have been killed with the bo’s’n and wireless operator, and the others when the boat was hit, and here we are with nothing much the matter with us. I don’t understand yet how it happened. It was one time in a thousand.”

"'Twas a narrow squeak, but I don't calculate on bein' blown up by a submarine a thousand times," said Bronk, adding with a chuckle: "It makes me laugh when I think of the way that Hun took things when I roped him and we hauled him aboard the raft."

John was well aware that his experience on the *Gorgonia* was too limited, and his service on the lake steamer too short, to insure him a berth in any capacity on another steamer. Besides, he was now in France and he could speak no French. The thought occurred to him that he might accept Doctor Gregory's offer and borrow the necessary money to pay his passage home, but he dismissed the suggestion at once as not in accordance with his determination to earn his own way, pay as he went and negotiate no debts. His own money and the money given him by the spy, Smith, he had no doubt was at the bottom of the sea. He remembered that he was counting it at the time of the explosion, but he had no further recollection of it, and had not seen it or thought of it from the moment he was knocked down by the

force of the exploding torpedo. He regretted now his lack of foresight in failing to salvage it, for there had been ample time.

A chuckle from Bronk's couch called John out of his reverie.

"I was just thinkin'," grinned Bronk as John turned an inquiring look toward him, "what a picture I made this mornin' layin' off here like a nabob while my hands and face were bein' washed by a purty female woman, and how the boys back in Arizony would guy me if they ever had a squint of it."

"Do you like the sea better than the ranch?" John asked.

"Oh, I'm goin' back to the ranch when the war is over, you bet!" Bronk said decisively. "I've been at sea now five years and I'm gettin' plumb tired knockin' around. I'm hungry to smell the dew and the sagebrush and the smoke of a camp fire—and for the boys. And, jiminy, how I'd like to feel my pony under me again! I'd like to see another of our Arizony sunsets—yellow and red and purple, like a touch of glory peepin' out of heaven. Then there's the good old camp fire

when the dark settles and the air grows cool, and we cook our bacon and coffee over it, and then sit around it smokin' and yarnin' for a spell until we turn into our blankets. There's nothin' in the whole world like that, Kid."

After a moment's silence, Bronk continued:

"When I go back, I'm goin' to set out to own a ranch of my own some day. I like the sea well enough, but I ain't cut out to be a master or even a mate. And every man ought to settle down and make good at something, and I reckon the ranch is my game."

"You said you'd go back after the war is over," said John. "Will you stay on the sea until it ends?"

"Nope, not me! I'm goin' to turn in and help lick the Huns. When I saw that pirate shellin' our helpless boats, I made up my mind it was time for every American that was fit to be an American to fight and help round up the Hun outlaws. When I saw those good old American destroyers swing in and sink the Hun pirates it just made my blood tingle. I felt sort of prouder than I ever did before that I was an American, and I said, 'See here,

Bronk, if you don't get in and do your part you're a no-good old coyote.' I'm goin' to fight, and I'm goin' to get in it just as soon as this ole busted laig of mine lets me."

"I suppose you'll go into the navy?" John asked.

"Nope! The calvary — the calvary for me if they'll have me there. I can fight better with a horse under me, and," Bronk grinned, "maybe I'd have a chance to use my rope now and again."

"The cavalry would suit you better, of course," John agreed. "I wish I was old enough to fight. I won't be eighteen till next January."

"I'm forty, but I kinder guess I'll pass for thirty," Bronk grinned. "Kid, you can choofer. Why don't you go into this here ambulance driving? Ask Doc about it. He'll fix it up for you. You don't have to be eighteen to do that."

"That's so!" John was quite excited with the suggestion. "I hadn't thought of doing anything but enlisting when the time came, and I won't be eighteen till next January."

Perhaps they would take me in the American Volunteer Ambulance Corps!"

"Shore they would and glad to get you," said Bronk. "I reckon that while I'm waitin' for the American calvary to get over here I'll help out carryin' a stretcher. I hear they need men for that. We'll go to it, Kid, and jine up."

"All right!" John agreed. "I'm with you, Bronk, if they'll take me! I'll speak to Doctor Gregory about it when he comes in this evening."

"Shore they'll take us both. We'll try to get into the same outfit!" Bronk was quite delighted with the idea. "We'll stick together if they'll let us, Kid, and me bein' older'n you, maybe it'll be a good thing. We'll hang together as pardners. But I'm goin' to get a gun in my hands first chance comes along, you bet."

John and Bronk spent the day discussing their scheme. Bronk was sure several weeks would pass before United States troops could be landed in France. Ships and convoys would have to be marshaled, and it would

take time to train a new army. Therefore, he assured John, they would be together in the ambulance service for several weeks, in all probability, before his coveted opportunity to enlist in a "calvary" regiment would appear.

It was evening when Doctor Gregory came in, as busy and as hurried as ever, but he seemed tireless and had lost none of his beaming good nature.

"How are you? How are you?" he greeted. "Tried to get around for a visit, but no time. Hope you've had a good day."

"Thank you," was all John could say before the doctor thrust a thermometer between his lips.

"That'll keep you quiet for one minute," laughed the doctor. "Wish I could look in at home for an evening. I've got the finest little girl there in the world. Eight years old today. Yes, this is her birthday! How the time slips away! She's the happiest, healthiest, most affectionate little lady you ever saw. I'd like to see her and Mrs. Gregory this minute! Have to introduce you to

them some time. You'll soon be on the way over. You must go to see them when you get home. It's a short trip over to St. Paul. Ever been homesick? Beastly feeling. Everybody has a bit of it now and again, I fancy. Minute's up."

Doctor Gregory removed the thermometer from John's lips and consulted it.

"Fine! Fine! No temperature to speak of. How they feeding you? Getting enough to eat?"

"I had a fine dinner," said John, "and I'm ready for supper."

"Don't let anything get past you. Eat all they'll give you. Have you sitting up in three or four days?"

"Doctor Gregory," said John, "I've decided to join the American Volunteer Ambulance Corps, as soon as I'm well enough, if they'll accept me. I thought perhaps you could tell me how to go about it?"

"Be a driver, eh?" The doctor sat down and looked at John seriously. "Can you handle a car pretty well?"

"Yes, and repair it too if I have to."

"Good! Good! It's dangerous work, my boy. Do you realize what it means? Ambulance drivers get down where shells and bullets fly. Sometimes they're killed. Night driving, and with no lights burning, over the worst roads you ever saw, and all that. Long hours—hard work—not much rest sometimes. What do you think about that?"

"I want to do anything I can to help win the war, and I can do that. I've been told they are in need of drivers."

"Yes, yes, they are. Very well," the doctor arose to go. "Plenty of time to think it over and talk about it. No doubt we can fix it up. I'm proud of your pluck."

"I'd like to know as soon as possible whether there's a chance for me," John urged. "I'll feel better to have it settled."

"Tomorrow then. How'll that suit you?"

"Thank you. That'll do very nicely." As the doctor moved away, John added: "It's bully good of you, Doctor, to help me, and it has been great to see someone from home that knew Dad."

"Glad I ran into you! Glad I ran into

you! It's a pleasure to do anything I can for Bill Adney's boy."

And so it came about that the following day an officer from the Ambulance Corps called upon John and Bronk, and asked John many questions concerning his experience in driving motor cars, and in the end it was arranged that as soon as they were sufficiently recovered, Bronk would be accepted as a stretcher bearer and John as a driver in the Ambulance Corps.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PACKAGE AT THE OFFICE

THE days that followed were tedious enough, as hospital restraint is bound to be for active, healthy men. Doctor Gregory visited the ward regularly, and never failed to tarry for a word with John. But he was always in a hurry, for there were seldom doctors enough or nurses enough to attend properly to the stream of wounded and sick constantly pouring into the hospital from the battle fields. During the doctors brief visits he seldom failed to speak longingly of home and of his little girl and Mrs. Gregory, and how he looked forward to the day when the war would be ended, and the Hun chained, and everybody living again in peace and safety as folk should live.

“Doc’s plumb near bein’ homesick,” Bronk observed after the doctor had left them one day.

"Yes," said John. "He thinks a lot of his little girl and his wife, doesn't he?"

"I reckon he ain't one of the fellers that came here just to see things. He came because he knew he was needed, and not because he was huntin' glory," said Bronk. "It must have been plumb hard for him to leave his folks behind too."

The nurses were busy and rarely had time for more than a word and a smile as they paused to perform some necessary service. Miss Bigelow, however, who was on night duty, always managed a little time to read to them and to keep them informed of such news as trickled in from the front during the day.

There were stories of fresh atrocities committed by the enemy—the cutting off of children's hands, the torture of civilians, the murder by most horrible methods of defenseless ones—stories that staggered belief, but which John and Bronk accepted without question for they had seen the Hun's method of treating helpless people.

One evening Miss Bigelow told them that the Germans had literally crucified a Cana-

dian soldier. She cried as she told them how the poor fellow had been spiked to a door and left to die a horrible death, and how the Germans had killed many of the Canadian wounded. All this served to increase the desire of John and Bronk to do their share to put an end to such savagery. John was hot with anger, and Bronk let forth violent streams of denunciation of the Huns.

They had been in hospital a week when the nurse announced one morning that they might leave their cots and enjoy the sunshine of the veranda. It was welcome relief, and presently, when they were comfortably seated in a pleasant corner, John declared that he had never realized as then how beautiful the sky and flowers and green trees and sunshine were. It is the way with most of us. We never appreciate the good things of life until we are denied them. We take the fresh air and sunshine and all of God's great gifts and blessings for granted, as though they were ours by right of ownership, and we treat them as the most commonplace of our possessions.

It was a great wide veranda, overlooking

a quiet street and a small park beyond. Here they found constant interest in watching the people passing in the street or lounging in the park, and particularly the soldiers, for there were many soldiers among them. Some were in French blue, others in British khaki, big Highlanders in kilts, and sailors from the ships. Nearly all were convalescents from the hospital. Some wore empty sleeves, some were on crutches, and some, the most pitiful of all, had bandaged eyes and were forever blind.

These heroes stirred John's sensibilities and patriotism to the depths. He looked upon them with awe. They were men who had actually taken part in the great struggle—men of battle who had been at grips with the mighty hordes of the modern Attila. These men had passed through the red carnage! They had faced fire and bursting shells and suffocating gas for the Great Ideal! Every man of them had freely offered his life, all that a man can give, that the world might be protected from the murder and pillage of despots, and people be permitted to live in

freedom and peace. Never before in all time had men faced such terrible odds or fought for a higher ideal or more bravely. These were men of deeds, heroes of the finest type, and the thought thrilled John as he never had been thrilled before. He wanted to wave his hat and cheer them, but he must needs sit still with his own wounded shoulder.

It was on the afternoon of this first day when John and Bronk were taken to the veranda that Doctor Gregory came hurrying to them with the announcement that he had been ordered to the front line dressing stations.

"Can't say where I'll be," he said, "but I'll drop you a line. You'll soon be out. Doing splendidly, both of you. Expect you'll be hearing the guns yourself pretty soon! Write me, John. I want to keep in touch with you. Here's an address that'll find me." He scribbled on a slip of paper, and gave the paper to John, adding, as he did so: "Send your letters to that address, and they'll be forwarded to me."

"Thank you," said John. "I'll write and let you know where I go when I leave here.

Maybe we'll meet at the front sometime, if I'm driving an ambulance."

"Can't tell! Can't tell! Here's something for you, John. Now don't say 'no.' I won't hear of it. I want to be father to Bill Adney's boy," and he pressed some bank notes into John's hand.

"No, Doctor, no! I don't need any money now! Really I don't! Thank you ever so much. It's just bully of you." John's voice choked. "I'll call on you, just as I'd call on my father, if I get in a pinch I can't get out of."

"Do! Do! That's what I want. Now take this money, John. It'll help you out some day when you won't be able to reach me."

"No, thank you, Doctor. I don't need it now, but I appreciate it just as much."

"You obstinate young rascal!" The doctor returned the money to his pocket reluctantly. "You'll keep your promise now, and if you ever do need money you'll come to me?"

"Yes, I'll do that. Thank you sir," said John, his heart full of gratitude.

With a hearty handshake Doctor Gregory hurried away, and John felt indescribably lonely at his going, for he was the only person in this strange land with whom John could talk sympathetically of home. This was a place that even Bronk, with all the friendship John felt for him, could not fill.

"Doc is white all through! He's a thoroughbred!" exclaimed Bronk when Doctor Gregory was out of hearing. "He thought like's not you were broke, and he dug down into his jeans to help you out."

"He's a good friend," said John.

"You didn't need the money, now, did you? You ain't busted, be you? Because if you do, Doc ain't the only friend you got."

"I don't need it. I'm all right. Doctor thought I might though."

Not long after the departure of Doctor Gregory a strange nurse appeared one evening in Miss Bigelow's place, and when John inquired for Miss Bigelow he was informed that orders had called her suddenly away to duty in another hospital.

"It seems like everybody is going some-

where else," observed Bronk. "It sort of made us feel lonesome when Doc left, and I reckon we'll both miss the little nurse a lot. But we'll soon be hoistin' sails and weighin' anchor ourselves, and bearin' for another port, and I'm achin' for the skipper to give the order."

All things come to an end sooner or later, and at last came a day when the surgeon pronounced Bronk's wound healed, and he was discharged from the hospital, with the promise that John would soon be permitted to follow.

"I'll hang around town till they let you go, Kid," said Bronk. "We've kind of hit it off as pardners, and we'd better stick together I reckon. I'll go scoutin' around to see what the ambulance outfit is goin' to do with us when they get us, and I'll drop in and let you know what I find out. I shore am glad to get on two good laigs again! Makes a feller feel whole."

"Thank you, Bronk!" and John was truly thankful that Bronk was not to desert him. "Ask them, will you, if there's any expense

connected with joining the Ambulance Corps?"

"Shore, I'll ask 'em," said Bronk. "Is there anything you're hankerin' after that I can bring you, Kid?"

"No, thank you, Bronk," John declined. "Just come around yourself when you feel like it."

"All right, Kid. I'll be around. So long!" and Bronk, very happy indeed at his freedom, strode away.

That evening, Bronk, his face aglow, and with the air of a boy just released from school, came in.

"Say, pardner," he exclaimed, depositing a bag of oranges, an American magazine, two New York papers, a fortnight old, and a bundle of more recent English papers before John, "I've been havin' the time of my life scoutin' around! Here's some truck I brought you. It'll help pass the time. How you makin' it?"

"Too lonesome for words!" John exclaimed. "But, say, Bronk! you're a brick to bring me these things!"

"I thought you'd like 'em," Bronk beamed. "Hurry up and get out of here yourself. The ambulance outfit want us pronto! Just as soon as you're in the game!"

"That's great! Did you find out about the expense? Do they furnish everything?"

"They'll send us from here to wherever they want us to go, but we've got to buy our own outfit. That means uniform and such trappin's. It'll cost us about fifty dollars each, I figger, or thereabouts. It's worth it to get into the game."

John's face fell, and he was silent for a moment. Then he said:

"I hoped they'd fix us up."

"Kid, be you busted?" asked Bronk.

"Yes," John confided, "what money I had went down with the ship."

"See here, pardner, don't let that worry you none," said Bronk with a cheerful grin. "I've got some good old American coin in my money belt, and I reckon they's enough to fit us both out and then some. I've been savin' up my wages toward that ranch, and I always keep some by me for anything that

might turn up, like what's happened now. Don't you bother about money no way. We've got enough."

"It's mighty good of you, Bronk, but I never borrow," John objected. "I promised myself when I left home that I'd make my way and wouldn't borrow. I've got to pay as I go. If anything happened to me before I paid you back you'd likely lose it if I took any money from you, and there won't be any chance to earn money while we're here."

"See here!" Bronk interrupted, "we agreed to be pardners didn't we?"

"Yes," John admitted.

"Well, then," Bronk continued, as though the matter were settled, "it's up to me to hand out the coin when I've got it and you ain't, and if you've got it when I ain't, it's your job to pay the bills. Just now I'm the pardner that happens to have the coin."

"No," John objected positively, "I've got to pay my own way."

"But ain't we pardners?" Bronk argued. "Don't pardners stand by each other? Don't they help each other out in a pinch?"

"When men go into partnership," John objected, "one puts in just as much as the other."

"Sometimes one puts up money and the other feller puts up experience," Bronk persisted. "This time I'm puttin' up the money and you're puttin' up the experience."

"No," John smiled at the suggestion, "I haven't any experience to put up, and I won't borrow."

"You're contrary as an ornery old cayuse!" Bronk exclaimed hopelessly. "This ain't a money-makin' pardnership anyway. We're just pardners to stand by each other. The money we're talkin' about is to get an outfit so's we can get into the game to help pore wounded men. We're just givin' what the outfit costs and maybe ourselves to help these fellers lick the Germans. I ain't offerin' to lend it to you, and you ain't borrowin'. I'm just givin' it. Say!" and Bronk's face broke into one of his infectious grins, "I ain't makin' you a present of it either. I'm givin' it to the American Ambulance outfit so you and me can work for 'em, and if they're willin' to take it you ain't got anything to say."

But John was obstinate, and refused to accept Bronk's argument that the money necessary to purchase equipment was not a proposed gift to himself but to the Ambulance Corps, and Bronk finally departed more ill-humored than John had ever seen him, and John himself was depressed that any misunderstanding should have arisen between them, for he had accepted Bronk as a true friend, and was fond of him, and his natural, unstilted ways.

That night before John went to sleep he had almost decided that Bronk was in the right, after all, and that his refusal was little less than obstinacy. If Bronk desired to make the donation necessary to equip him for ambulance service, his refusal to accept would be a refusal to enter the service, which was the farthest from his desires. And when he was in position to do so he could repay Bronk the amount.

When Bronk called the following afternoon to make his daily visit he had apparently forgotten his ill-humor, and was running over with an exuberance of high spirits.

"You ornery little red-headed cuss!" he exclaimed, with his usual broad grin, "there ain't a chance for you to quit me now. I've found out that a feller has left the money at the Ambulance Service to pay for the outfit of some feller that wants to drive an ambulance and hain't got the coin to pay for the outfit himself. That's you."

"Bronk, you old scoundrel, this is a scheme of yours," John laughed. "You're the one that's put up the money, but I'll take you up on it, if you'll let me pay you back when I can. Is it a bargain?"

"All right, Kid," and Bronk's grin broadened. "That's all right if it will make you feel better. Now hurry up and get out of this place. I'm plumb lonesome scoutin' around this town alone, and I want to get into the round-up."

When Bronk made his usual call one afternoon a week later he found John preparing to go, and all dressed in his ship's clothes. His coat and shirt, which had been torn by the shell that wounded him, were neatly mended and cleaned and he was eagerly awaiting

Bronk's arrival. They hastened to thank the nurse for all the kindness and attention that had been shown them. And when they left her she directed that John ask at the office for a package containing the personal belongings found in his pockets at the time of his arrival. This he did, and upon opening the package discovered his jackknife, the automatic pistol, a handkerchief, some old letters and an envelope carefully sealed with wax. He turned back with the envelope to the young woman in charge of the office, remarking, as he offered it to her:

"There must be some mistake. I do not think this is mine."

"It has some money in it that we found in your pockets," said she. "We sealed it here for safe-keeping."

John broke the seal, and to his amazement discovered the one hundred fifty dollars given him by the spy Smith, together with his own twenty dollars.

"I thought it went down with the ship!" he exclaimed. "I must have put it into my pocket."

"*Shore* you did!" and Bronk beamed with pleasure at his friend's good fortune.

"I guess it was intended that I should use this money to buy my outfit to get into the Ambulance Service. So I won't need that money you put up for the outfit after ail, Bronk!"

"It's your'n if you want it any other time," beamed Bronk. "Everything is workin' out fine! Come along, pardner, and we'll hit the trail pronto, and get signed up and buy our outfits. I'm itchin' to be doin' something."

Within the hour John and Bronk were formally enrolled, and with instructions to report at once in Paris, purchased their necessary uniforms and personal equipment and departed from Brest on an afternoon train.

CHAPTER XV

OFF TO THE FRONT

IT WAS late that night when they arrived in Paris. They found lodgings in a small hotel, and after a hurried breakfast in a restaurant the following morning reported at the address given them, and were greeted pleasantly by the officer in command.

"We need you," said he. "We are reorganizing a section, and you are just in time to fill it out. Are you ready to begin duty at once?"

"That's what we're here for," said Bronk. "We're on hand to help out where we'll do the most good, and we want to get into the round-up pronto. My pardner here is a first-class hand chooferin' cars, and I can hold one end of a stretcher as well as the next feller, but I can't choofer anything but a cayuse. If there's any hoss wranglin' to do, I know hosses."

"There's need for stretcher bearers as well as ambulance drivers. Lieutenant Duclos," the officer addressed a man in the uniform of a French lieutenant who was passing his desk, "here are two men for you. One is a driver and the other will serve as stretcher bearer. You require one more driver, I believe, to complete your section?"

"Yes, sir, thank you," Lieutenant Duclos acknowledged. "Will you men come with me?"

As he led them to a table, at which he seated himself, John was impressed by his marked resemblance in stature, build and characteristics of movement to the former second steward of the *Gorgonia*, and when he spoke his accent was so like that of the spy that John felt instinctively repelled. Lieutenant Duclos, however, had black hair, a closely trimmed, pointed black beard and a decidedly swarthy skin, while the spy's hair and mustache were blond and his complexion ruddy. There was one other similarity. Lieutenant Duclos' eyes were gray, and when he looked at John they held the same expression

as those of the spy when he gave John the automatic pistol and directed him to shoot in protection of the papers.

"What is your name?" he asked John.

"John Adney, sir."

"Your nearest relative and his address?"

John gave Doctor Gregory's address.

"You can drive a car and care for it under difficult conditions?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is your name?" he asked Bronk.

"Stevens. My Ma named me Henery. That makes Henery Stevens, but you can call me Bronk if you want to. That's what the boys called me on the ranch. The fellers in the fo'c's'l called me Long Hank, and if you don't like Bronk you can call me that, I ain't partic'ler," Bronk added confidentially.

"Henry Stevens," Lieutenant Duclos repeated, quite ignoring Bronk's additional information. "Nearest relative and address?"

"I reckon you might put down Jim Hooper, Globe, Arizony. I'm kind of out of touch with my folks, but Jim'll round 'em up if you want him to. When I'm in New

York I bunk up with the outfit at the Seamen's Home down on South Street. The feller in the office there has got my pedigree too. I gave it to him."

"Report here at twelve o'clock, noon, prepared for duty," and Lieutenant Duclos turned his back to them to indicate their dismissal.

"We'll be here, you bet," Bronk grinned as he and John departed.

"Say," remarked Bronk when they had passed out of Lieutenant Duclos' hearing, "that feller thinks he's a major general or something. The way he asked about your chooferin' was as though he didn't think you could do it, but he'd have to put up with you because he had you on his hands. I didn't like the tone of his voice. I started out to josh him, but I let up on it. He feels too all high and mighty for just a looterant."

"Did you ever see the second steward on the *Gorgonia*?" asked John. "The one that turned out to be a spy, and nearly got me into a fix?"

"No," said Bronk, "not to know him.

Down for'ard we never saw the fellers in the cabin."

"Lieutenant Duclos' voice is so much like his I'd think it was the steward when he spoke, if I didn't see him. He looks like him too, only the steward had light hair and light skin. They look so much alike that I wish we were to be under another officer."

"Just looks don't matter," said Bronk. "He's likely all right, and it's just his way. He can't help the way he looks."

A string of ambulances drew up before the building as they emerged. They were laden with wounded soldiers. A young American in the uniform of the Ambulance Corps told them that the wounded had been brought to the city from a field hospital by railway train.

"I'll be back in a minute. I want to see the way these fellers handle the stretchers. I've got to learn my business," and Bronk left John and the young American who had joined them, to go on a tour of observation.

"You're a driver too, aren't you?" the young man asked when Bronk had gone. "I'm just in it myself."

"Yes," said John. "We arrived yesterday. We're to report for duty at noon."

"You're in luck," said the young man. "I came in with a bunch of fellows a week ago. The others got their assignments yesterday, and left early this morning, but they were short of cars and I only got mine today. I'm to report at noon too—Lieutenant Duclos' section. My name is Gibson, from Denver—Billy Gibson."

"Then we'll be in the same section. My name is John Adney, from Duluth," and as John returned the hearty handshake of his new acquaintance, he added: "It's mighty good to meet someone from home, Mr. Gibson!"

"You bet! Even if you are an easterner and I a westerner; it's all home over there in the good old United States!" declared Billy. "But *can* the 'mister.' Call me 'Billy.' We're going to work together and we may as well chum up."

"All right, Billy," laughed John, already feeling that they were friends, "and you call me John."

"Yes, of course, unless I find something that suits you better. What ship did you come over on?"

John proceeded to relate his experiences, and Billy was vastly impressed.

"You're a veteran already! Wounded and all that!" exclaimed Billy finally. "How do you feel when you're under fire?"

"I can't explain it," said John. "I didn't have time to think about it, it came so suddenly."

"I'll tell you why I ask," Billy confided. "I suppose they'll have us poking around with our cars in places where the Hun's are dropping too many shells for comfort, and I don't know how I'll stand up under it. Maybe I'll be scared stiff."

"I don't set myself up as a hero, and I didn't come over here just to do heroic stunts. I came because they told us at the university they needed men over here to drive ambulances, and that wounded soldiers were suffering because there were not drivers enough to man the ambulances. After I heard that I couldn't stay home eating three square

meals a day, and keeping on at college, and having a good time generally. It made me feel like a selfish slacker, and so I threw up everything and came over."

"It was the bombing in London, and the headless baby, and the way the Germans tried to kill the people in the boats after the ship went down that sent me here," said John. "And the more I thought of that spy, Smith, the madder I got.

"I don't know how I'll feel either when I get under fire. I'm afraid I'll feel like running. But we're Americans, and whether we're scared or not it's up to us to do our work and not let on we're scared."

"Of course," agreed Billy. "Do you know John, we hear a lot about men being fearless, and all that—men that don't know what it is to be afraid—but that isn't anything to boast about. If a man is like that he hasn't any more imagination than a cow. He hasn't ordinary human sensibilities. If he doesn't realize danger, he isn't brave when he faces it, is he? Isn't it a normal instinct to be afraid when your life is in danger?"

"I guess you're right," John agreed.

"The brave man is the one who realizes danger and is afraid, but forces his fear aside and plunges into danger when it is his duty to do so, and does his duty in spite of everything, and if he's hurt bears his pain without a whimper or whine. Of course it's natural that a soldier will get hardened to danger after a time, and that his sensibilities will be deadened to some extent. Most of them, they say, become fatalists and feel that they won't be killed or wounded anyhow until their time has come. I hope I'll be brave, but I'm not going to brag till I get a tryout. Fact is, I don't know how I'll act when it comes to the scratch. I know I'll be scared to the soles of my feet when I go under fire."

"That's the way I feel," said John. "I'd be ashamed to go home or ever look a man in the face again, though, if I turned out to be a coward. A fellow had better be dead than have that happen to him."

"That's true," Billy assented. "And we're Americans, as you say, and we've got to show these Frenchmen and British that we're made

of as good stuff as they are. I've an idea Lieutenant Duclos don't think much of us. He seems to think that some of us young fellows only came to have a good time, and to collect souvenirs. I heard him say as much to a man the other day, and he said that when he took command of a section he expected to have command of men and not a lot of schoolboys out for a lark. They say he was once in the French Army, but has lived for some years in America. He only returned to France two or three weeks ago, and went into the service again. It seems to me that with his country at war he waited a long while. He has been assigned to the Ambulance Corps, they say, because he speaks English perfectly, and understands Americans. We'll show him we're here for business."

"You bet we will!" John agreed.

At that moment Bronk returned and broke in upon the conversation.

"Kid, that's the toughest sight I ever saw," he declared. "I don't see how some of those soldiers live, they're cut up so bad. And I didn't hear a squeak from one of 'em. Most

of 'em haven't been cleaned up either. They're covered with trench mud. They must be sufferin' like tarnation."

"I've been watching them every day," said Billy. "They've got no end of nerve."

"Mr. Gibson—" John began.

"Billy Gibson," Billy broke in.

"This is my friend Bronk—Mr. Stevens—from Globe, Arizona," John continued, smiling at Billy's insistence. "Billy is to drive an ambulance in our section. He hails from Denver, so you're both westerners and ought to get on well together."

"Glad to know you, Billy," Bronk acknowledged with a grin. "The kid here thinks Denver is out west, but down in Arizony we call it east."

"You're a westerner to me even if I am a westerner to John," Billy laughed. "When I was in New York they called Chicago 'out West.' But we're all Americans, and it just shows what a mighty big country we have to be proud of."

"Yep!" agreed Bronk, "and we're proud of it, too, all right. Say, how far is it to the

tomb of Napoleon? I've heard a lot about that feller, and I'd like to see where he's buried."

"Quite a jaunt." Billy consulted his watch. "But it's only eight o'clock. We've got time to go and get back for a bite to eat before noon."

"All right," said Bronk. "You lay the course and we'll have a look at it."

Promptly at twelve o'clock the three friends reported at the office of Lieutenant Duclos, where they found several other drivers, two stretcher bearers and a mechanic. The drivers were all Americans, and nearly all young college men who had volunteered for this dangerous service through a high sense of patriotism.

There were twenty ambulances in the section under Lieutenant Duclos, and in addition there was a large touring car for the lieutenant's personal use. Nearly all the ambulances were new cars recently received from the United States. One of these was assigned to John and one to Billy. Bronk attached himself to John's car, and before one o'clock, with Lieutenant Duclos' car in advance, they

were winding their way through the city streets.

The road led out through the Bois-de-Bologne and thence to Versailles. Here they spent the evening and the following day while their cars were inspected at the headquarters of the Army Automobile Service. Each car was numbered and each driver given a *livret matricule*, which was a pass to every motor park in France. They were also supplied with gas masks and instructed in their use.

At last they were on their way. French soldiers along the road shouted to them as they passed, "*Camarade!*" or "*Bonjour!*", or, if they could speak English, a cheerful "Good morning, American!" or "Hello!" and some little children shouted, "*Américain!*" Out they sped upon the country road, past dewy fields glistening in the morning sunshine, through a hamlet and out again among the fields.

"Well, Bronk," said John when they were out of Versailles, "we're on our way to the front, and we're going to see fighting. How do you feel?"

"Like Yip, hoorayin'!" exploded Bronk. "I felt while we were waitin' for this as though there was somethin' tied up inside me! I want to get in the game, and I won't be feelin' as though I'm all in it till I get a gun in my hands and get after the Germans right. This'll only be a way to help pass the time till the American soldiers get over."

"But this is necessary work! Just as necessary as fighting!" John resented Bronk's intimation that it was of minor importance.

"Oh, shore it is!" Bronk admitted. "But you see, Kid, I've always had a gun, and I used to think I knew how to use it pretty well. While you were tinkerin' around your car I asked one of the fellers if we didn't get guns, and he said we wa'n't allowed to have 'em, and if the Germans ever captured us and we were totin' guns they'd kill us, because we ain't enlisted. From what I've seen of 'em I'd expect they'd kill me if they caught me whether I had a gun or not."

"I don't believe it would make any difference," John agreed.

"Well, say, Kid," Bronk spoke con-

fidentially, "I've got my good old forty-four tucked away in my clothes, and there ain't no German goin' to see me throw up my hands for the askin', you bet!"

"Good for you, Bronk!" exclaimed John. "I thought you'd not part with your gun, and I've got the automatic the steward gave me. It makes me feel safer to have it."

"Stick to her!" said Bronk. "You'll need her! And carry extra ca'tridges."

That night the ambulances drew up in a small village where provision had been made for them. Lieutenant Duclos and several of the drivers were quartered in houses, but after they had dined John and Bronk, by choice, arranged their beds on stretchers under the open sky.

"It's bully to sleep out again," remarked John as he rolled into his blankets.

"It shore is," agreed Bronk. "It makes me hungry for the sagebrush country and the good old cow camps again."

Breakfast was eaten at daybreak, and the sun had not yet risen when the ambulances drew out of the village on their way to the

front. There was need for hurry. John and Billy were the only drivers in the section without previous experience in the field, and because of a dearth of ambulances they were denied the usual period of training in the rear for new drivers, and they were glad of the exception made in their favor.

For several miles beyond the village where they halted for the night the route followed a valley down which coursed a small river. The valley was lined by low, wooded hills, and nestling below the hills were many small villages. Now and again a halt was made in one or another of the villages when a driver found adjustment of his car necessary. At these times children gathered around the cars and sometimes sang the *Marseillaise*, accompanied by the distant boom of cannon. These were children whose fathers and brothers were fighting, or had perhaps fallen in the great war, and the thought stirred John's patriotism as it never had been stirred before.

Sentries with fixed bayonets were posted at every crossroad. The roads were filled with troops, baggage wagons, guns and ammunition

carts surging forward to the battle front. The soldiers were tried veterans who had seen many months of fighting in the trenches. Most of them were ragged, but all were cheerful. Sometimes they called in good-natured bantering to the ambulance drivers. Bronk always had an answering hail, and he was delighted when they passed a mule train.

"It shore does me good to see the ornery old mules," he declared. "They use 'em for packin' down at Fort Apache in Arizony. I used to see 'em goin' out with the calvary, and they shore were sleek and could tote some load."

John had small time for anything but strict attention to his car, winding his way along the congested roads, which were cut and rutted by the wheels of cannon and heavy traffic, and no little skill was necessary to avoid collisions and disaster.

They paused in a village for supper that evening, and then pushed on in the darkness. The roads were even more crowded now than in the day. No lights were permitted, for already they were within the range of German

guns. French batteries posted on the hills were roaring, and as they passed beyond the batteries they could hear the scream of shells overhead.

"Bronk," asked John after a long silence, "does it make you feel afraid at all?"

"I'm kind of wonderin' if some of them shells ain't likely to drop in this way, but it don't make me feel what you'd call afraid," said Bronk. "It makes me want to get in it myself and be doin' somethin'. I'd kinder feel safer if I was where I could see the Germans and had a chance to look out for myself."

"That's the way with me. The shells make me feel a little nervous," John confessed, "but I'm not really scared the way I expected to be. I feel as though I want to hurry down where I can see the Germans, and get at them."

"It kind of locos us, I reckon," suggested Bronk, adding admiringly, "Kid, you're doin' great! I've been wonderin' how you kept from bunkin' into things or goin' in the ditch with the whole outfit!"

"I'm expecting every minute to run into something," John admitted.

But on they went, straining their eyes in the darkness, worming their way past wagons and trucks, all without lights like themselves. Near midnight they passed the dim form of a sentry at the edge of a town, rifle on shoulder and bayonet fixed. Then they moved down a deserted street with darkened houses and here and there a gap where a Boche shell had found its mark and left a pile of ghastly ruins. Finally Lieutenant Duclos called a halt and they drew up in the village square and bivouacked for the night.

Despite his long, hard day at the wheel, John lay awake for a great while listening to the intermittent discharge of artillery and thinking that perhaps each explosion he heard sent men to their death out there in the cold, blood-soaked fields; and someone, somewhere, loved each man who was dying, and was waiting for him to come home from the great war — fathers and mothers who would never see their sons again, and little children who would never see their fathers.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW BILLY DIED

MORNING came with a mist hanging low upon the village street and spreading away over the adjacent fields. Lieutenant Duclos and his drivers were astir at dawn and an hour later breakfasted in a house where permanent provision had been made for them, for the village was to be the headquarters of the section. After breakfast the ambulance drivers were quartered in near-by houses, and upon their request John and Billy were assigned to the same house.

Bronk, with one or two other volunteers, was sent forward to the trenches two miles away, where he was to be utilized in carrying wounded from the trenches to the dressing station in the village, where they received temporary treatment before they were taken over by the ambulances and transferred to a hospital.

"Yip!" Bronk exploded when the order came. "I was afraid they'd keep me hanging around this layout! So long, Kid! I'll see you often. We'll keep hitched up."

"So long, and take care of yourself, Bronk." John shook his friend's hand as they parted.

Now and again during the day stretchers came in carrying wounded. They were slung between two wheels with a man at each end. Those of the wounded who were able to do so walked. When their wounds were dressed they were carried away in ambulances to a hospital. An ambulance could accommodate three men too seriously wounded to sit up, or six sitting cases.

Lieutenant Duclos established his headquarters in an old stone house on a hill, at the edge of the village. Here the single street was under his observation, and from an upper window he could plainly see the front-line trenches of the enemy.

John felt strangely alone after Bronk's departure. He and Billy walked the length of the village street, and then returned to arrange their quarters. Overhead shells screamed in-

termittently as French and British batteries stationed upon hills in the rear, and German batteries on hills beyond the front strove to destroy each other. In the village itself life went on quite as if there were no war and the world was at peace. Women and girls and old men dug in the gardens, or went about selling their vegetables; and children played in the street apparently oblivious to the roar of artillery, and screaming shells above them.

No lights were allowed in the streets at night. Now and again illuminating bombs rose above the distant trenches, and floating in the air for a little, cast a weird, green light over the landscape. John and Billy were about to retire an hour after dark, when a line of Hun prisoners, silent and sullen, in dirty gray uniforms, marched through under a French guard. They were the first prisoners they had seen, and the spectacle of the marching, sullen men brought them nearer to a realization of the struggle taking place so close at hand than even the thunder of artillery or the few wounded that had been brought into the village during the day.

All night long there was the rumble of heavy wheels and the tread of marching men in the street below. The village was on the dividing line between British and French sectors. Now French, now British were passing to the front. It was only at night that these movements of troops and supplies could be made upon the open roads. So close were they to the front lines that during the day the roads were under the enemy's observation, and any activity then would have led to a bombardment by the Hun gunners.

On the second night in the village John and Billy were roused from a sound sleep by a tremendous explosion that broke the windows and shook the building to its foundations. They sprang from bed, and as they fumbled for their clothes in the darkness and dressed there came a half dozen other explosions, though not in the immediate vicinity of the building in which they were quartered.

Out in the street there was much confusion. The Germans had evidently made an effort to shell the yard in which the ambulances were parked, but had failed to damage them.

Some buildings adjoining the yard had been partially demolished, several civilians had been killed and injured, and one shell had fallen in the street among soldiers just relieved from the trenches, killing four and wounding fifteen.

All of this John did not learn at once, but he and Billy realized that there would be need of their services, and running to the yard where the ambulances were parked found the other drivers arriving. Nearly an hour passed before Lieutenant Duclos appeared and ordered six ambulances to proceed to the dressing station.

John and Billy were among those selected. This was their first service, and John's nerves were pitched to a high tension as he drove out of the yard and at the dressing station received his load of wounded.

Lieutenant Duclos in his touring car led the ambulances down the village street and then out upon a road which for several miles paralleled the trenches but were separated from them by a ridge of wooded hills. Then the road turned sharply to the left, and for

another five miles ran through level, cultivated fields.

Dawn was breaking when they drew into the yard of a large and apparently recently constructed hospital. Cold and dreary and cheerless the building looked, and as they halted the driver of the forward car, leaping from his car, exclaimed:

“My God! Boys look at this!”

One end of the hospital was torn away, and under hastily erected canvas awnings in the yard was a line of cots, with two nurses moving among the cots. On the opposite side of the yard lay a dozen silent forms covered with sheets. As John dismounted from his car a doctor came forward to meet Lieutenant Duclos.

“More cases! Have to make room for them somewhere! End of main hospital bombed last night! Ten patients and two nurses killed and one doctor badly knocked out!”

It was Doctor Gregory! There could be no doubting that voice and those big, broad shoulders, and John stepped forward to meet his friend.

"Doctor Gregory!"

"Why, John, my boy! I'm glad to see you! In uniform, too, doing God's work! Good! Want to talk with you before you leave!"

The wounded were quickly removed from the ambulances. John and Billy shuddered as they saw them in the gray morning light. Some of the wounds were ghastly, but there was no sound or complaint from the men. A soldier in John's car was dead. He had been too badly wounded to survive the journey from the village. They were French *poilus* just from the trenches, retreating to rest billets when they were wounded. Their old, faded blue uniforms and hobnailed boots were coated with mud. The temporary bandages had in some cases loosened, and blood oozed from them. Some of them were fearfully mangled. One man had half of his face blown away, and he was blind.

"It makes me feel—almost sick," John confided to Billy, who stood by his side. "I never thought it could be as bad as this."

"Neither did I, John," said Billy quietly. "It's awful beyond words. I'd be afraid to

write my mother of what we've seen tonight. She'd never rest again until I was home."

"We're helping them, Billy. I'm glad I came."

"Yes, we're helping them, and I'm glad I am here and of some use, but I've been terribly afraid since that shell woke us. John," Billy added after a moment's silence, "I wouldn't like to die that way. It's awful. It's glorious I suppose to die for others, and to be crippled for the sake of others, but there's no glory for the man who's dead, and the wounded who survive will only be heroes for a day and then the world will forget them. I admire and honor these soldiers more than ever before, but I—I don't want to die that way. John—" the sun was just rising—"I want to live for a long time in the glorious, peaceful world over where we came from—and die there. I want to die naturally, when my time comes. I don't think, John, I'm afraid to die, but I don't want to die this way.

"Think of those men, young fellows all of them, who will never see the sun rise again, or the green grass or the blossoming trees and

flowers in the spring or smell the sweet good air. This world will go on and on without them and soon forget that they ever lived, except those who were near and dear to them. Six months after the war ends the heroism of those who gave their lives here will be forgotten. They're fighting for you and me, and giving everything for us! It's Christlike! It's wonderful beyond words! John, when I die I want to be in my bed, and feel on my forehead the touch of the hand of someone who loves me.

"Excuse me, John, for all this. I—I think I'm nervous. I'm not used to it yet."

"I think I know something of how you feel, about your people at home," John sympathized. "But I've been in the lumber woods leading a rough life and I guess it has toughened me some."

"Perhaps it's because I'm tired. It was a hard pull coming out, and we haven't had much rest. Aren't you tired, John?" Billy asked.

"Not much," said John. "You see I've been driving tote team all winter and that

got me used to it. I used to be on the road twelve or fourteen hours a day in all weather."

"You're a wonder, John, and tough as nails!" Billy spoke admiringly, and then stood silent for a little gazing out over a field brilliant with spring blossoms. "Look at those flowers, John! Aren't they beautiful? I'd hate to feel I'd never see them again, like those poor fellows who were killed last night."

"The flowers are fine," said John, but his mind was on the practical, and he added, "I wonder if we're going to get something to eat before we go? I'm hungry as a horse."

Presently John's appetite and the appetite of the other drivers was satisfied at the hospital. Doctor Gregory ran out for a moment to shake John by the hand as he was going.

"No time to talk! Up to my ears in work! Take care of yourself, lad! Look me up whenever you're over here!"

Lieutenant Duclos had not delayed, but had returned immediately to the village. While John tarried to speak to Doctor Gregory the other cars departed one by one until only Billy

remained. When John attempted to crank his car it did not spark properly, and he called to Billy:

"Go ahead, Billy, I'll be right after you."

Billy drew out and was a mile in advance when John had finally made the necessary adjustment, and followed. When Billy made the turn to the road paralleling the range of hills which protected the road to the village from the enemy's observation, John was less than half a mile behind him. Between the road and the thicker trees near the top of the hill were old trenches and dugouts. This was a part of the British sector, and some Tommies along the road hailed John as he passed. An occasional shell passed harmlessly overhead, and John, deeply interested in his first view of trenches, scarcely heard the explosions, for already he was becoming accustomed to them.

Presently he observed Billy halt his car, dismount, and cross the road into a field at the right. When he drew up behind Billy's car, Billy was leaning over a spring in the field bathing his face.

"Come on, John," he shouted, as John brought his car to a stop. "The water is fine and cool. It'll wake us up."

As John sprang to the ground there came an explosion that sent him staggering back against the car, and to his horror he saw Billy crumple in a heap. A shell had fallen and raised a cloud of dust a few feet beyond the spring where Billy was stooping as he bathed his face, and a fragment had completely severed Billy's head.

John ran to the spring and stood looking down in dumb stupefaction upon the dead body of his comrade. He could scarcely realize for a moment that Billy's life had been so quickly snuffed out. Within the hour Billy had said that he did not want to die this way. Now it all came back to John with vivid distinctness. The sun was shining and the flowers were blooming and Billy would never see them again, and he would never return to his own dear land that he loved so well. And no one would remember long how Billy had died, doing God's work—no one but Billy's father and mother, and John who

had seen him die—and a lump came into John's throat and a mist filled his eyes.

Suddenly another terrific explosion nearly threw John from his feet and sprayed him with earth. A shell had made a clean hit on Billy's car, and the two ambulances were completely wrecked. Shells began to fall now up and down the road and back over the face of the ridge. Some British Tommies were shouting to him, and above the roar of guns and exploding shells which had so suddenly burst forth he heard a British trooper's voice:

“Run for hit, man! Run for the trenches! The 'Uns are attacking!”

John ran across the road, past the wrecked cars, and after the soldiers who had taken to the cover of the old trenches on the hillside. Limbs were falling from the trees and great trees were falling. Trenches were crumbling, and earth was spouting and flying all about him and over the whole slope of the ridge. It was evident the Germans were laying a barrage in preparation for an attack.

CHAPTER XVII

CAPTURED

JOHN with the soldiers wound their way through the trench which led them up the hillside. How they all escaped instant extermination was a mystery to John. The roar of exploding shells was terrific. Presently a man near John fell wounded by a fragment of shell. John assisted one of the soldiers and they carried the wounded man to a dugout, which was fitted with a bomb-proof door and safe enough unless a direct hit from a large shell should send the roof tumbling upon their heads to bury them.

One of the soldiers had a meager first-aid kit, and John volunteered to bandage and dress the wound of the man who was hit. Presently they brought him other wounded men for his attention, and he was so busy bandaging and dressing wounds that he scarcely realized when the brief barrage was at an end and the

rattle of rifles and machine guns took the place of bursting shells. Suddenly, as he bent over a man, he was startled by the command:

"Zurrender!"

Looking up he saw two helmeted heads, and two pairs of eyes peering cautiously into the semidarkness of the dugout.

"'Uns!" exclaimed one of the wounded Tommies. "The bloomin' 'Uns 'arve taken the 'ill!"

"Zurrender or ve vill shood!" the German commanded in broken English.

"We surrender!" the Tommy called back. "Hall in 'ere are wounded and we 'arve no harms!"

The assurance appeared to satisfy the Germans of their safety, and two gray-clad figures appeared boldly in the doorway, and without further parley or words opened fire upon the wounded men in the dugout.

"We surrender! We're hall wounded men!" shouted the Tommy desperately.

The Germans gave no heed. It was apparently their intention to kill every man in the dugout, after the cold-blooded, inhuman

manner of the Hun. They fired promiscuously and without taking definite aim. Themselves in the broad daylight outside, it was probable they could not see plainly the men in the partial darkness of the dugout.

Then John remembered his automatic. It was in his hip pocket. With the first fire of the Germans he had flattened himself against the wall of the dugout, and while he could not easily be seen by those outside, they made excellent targets. He drew his automatic and opened fire. A bullet smashed the right hand of one of the Germans and another shattered a knee of the other. The man with the injured hand dropped his rifle with a howl of pain, while the other swung around and fell into the trench outside.

"There'll be more of them blighters comin' this way," said a Tommy. "Hi'm thinkin' you 'ad better not stay in 'ere. You can't 'elp us any more, though we'd hall 'arve been killed if you 'adn't took a 'and at them. When they come they'll tyke you out and shoot you or do worse by you. They'll 'arve revenge, 'ear me."

"I'll be taken if I go out!" said John. "I may as well stay here."

"Hi'd take a charnce," advised the man. "If you finds the 'Uns too close drop your pistol, man. They'll shoot you if they tyke you with a gun in your 'ands, you not bein' a hinlisted man."

"If I can't help you men I'll take the chance," John decided. "They'll get me in here anyway if I stay, and outside I may slip through them."

"You carn't 'elp us," said the Tommy. "Your best charnce is to go. 'Ide in a shell 'ole. Our lads'll be back at 'em, 'ere me."

John looked cautiously out. No Germans were in sight in the adjacent trench save the German with the wounded knee. John re-loaded his automatic with a fresh clip of cartridges, and went boldly forth. The wounded German made a movement with his rifle, and covering him with the automatic John took possession of the gun and carried it beyond the man's reach, while the German cursed him in broken English.

For a little way he ran to the westward,

then mounting a broken segment of the trench and peering over the top, discovered that the fighting was taking place between him and the road. The British had been reinforced by reserves, and were driving the Germans back up the hill. It was evident they would soon be upon him, and if they discovered him in their retreat they would either shoot him on the spot or take him prisoner. There was no possible hiding place that he could discover. The dugout was now one hundred and fifty yards away, and he decided to attempt a retreat to the dugout, in the hope that the Germans in their haste in falling back up the hill would not pause to investigate it, and that there he might escape detection and capture.

Suddenly he heard firing in the direction of the dugout. Crawling carefully along the trench and peering around a turn he discovered to his dismay that it was occupied by several Germans, and his retreat in that direction already hopelessly cut off.

Turning about, he hastened again in the opposite direction in the vain hope of discovering a hiding place. He had taken but a

few steps, however, when, in a turn of the trench, he ran into a score of Germans.

Escape was impossible. Half a dozen rifles were raised, there was a guttural command, John threw up his hands and was a prisoner.

CHAPTER XVIII

PLANNING ESCAPE

JOHN was immediately taken in charge by a slightly wounded German, who ordered him, in broken English to march in advance, and close at John's heels hurried him back to the wooded hilltop behind the German advance. On the farther side of the ridge they were, for the present, out of range of whistling bullets, and the guard directed that John take a slower pace, and taking a place at John's side, asked in a friendly tone:

"You vas an American? You drive an ambulance already?"

"Yes," answered John, despondently, "I'm an American. I'm an ambulance driver."

"I am of Saxony. I am made to fight. I do not like to fight in this war." He waved his arm to indicate the devastation surrounding them. "I do not like this. Maybe," his

voice dropped to a confidential tone, "I let you get away. You like that? It was goot to drive the ambulance."

John's heart leaped with excitement and hope at the suggestion.

"Do you mean you will let me go? Let me escape?" he asked eagerly.

"I cannot let you go so," said the guard. "I vill maybe show you how. Maybe no. I cannot say. Maybe I vill go too. I do not like this fighting." Again he waved his arm. "I vill maybe make of myself a prisoner mit the French or the British. I am tired of the fighting. One, two, three years I fight. There iss no end to it. I am tired of it. Maybe some day I go to America to live."

"Thank you! Thank you if you will show me how to escape! If you get to the British or French lines I'll do anything I can to help you."

John could scarcely credit his ears. To have found a friend in his guard was quite beyond his expectations or belief. He had heard that some of the Germans, other than the Prussians, were wearied of the war and

had small heart left for fighting, and this was doubtless one of those eager to be out of it.

"My arm, it is not much hurt. You vill dress it maybe?" asked the guard presently, holding out his left arm with a blood-drenched sleeve.

"Yes," said John. "I'll fix it up for you the best I can."

"That iss goot. It vill not long be sore mit me. You vill not dress it here so soon yet. Ve vill find a place to stop, und then you vill dress it for me."

The rattle of rifle and machine-gun fire could now be heard in the woods at the crest of the ridge, indicating that the Germans had been driven back from the opposite slope. The guard hastened their pace, remarking:

"The fight vas to try the British lines and to dake the hill, for the Germans vere not in a strong place here."

There were many dead strewn over the slope, some of them terribly mangled; and there still remained on the ground some of the more severely wounded, both British and Germans, suffering and without attention. John

expressed a desire to stop and offer them such help as he could, but the guard objected.

“There vill come men soon to dake them away. Ve cannot do it. Ve must not stop here.”

The hillside had been torn by the barrage. Great trees had been blown to pieces, and hardly a tree stood that had not been stripped of foliage and limbs, the naked trunks reaching up to heaven, mute witnesses of the desolation and horror that had been brought upon the earth. The ground, too, had been torn and plowed by shells, and here and there were deep shell holes. Hardly a square yard, indeed, had escaped the force of the bombardment.

The Germans were making a stand on the hill. Reinforcements with machine guns were hurrying forward to their aid. The guard paused for a moment to listen.

“They are holding the British,” he remarked. “It vas quiet for a long time here, and the British they removed troops to other parts. It vas not vell. The Germans had few men here too, but in the night they brought

new troops up to take the hill, for it is a good place to make the line strong. There are German spies among the British, and they signaled the British line was weak, and then the Germans brought up the troops to take the hill.

"If the Germans hold the hill maybe they make ready in one week, maybe two weeks to make the attack on the French. If they hold the hill the British cannot make what you call it, a flank when the Germans make the attack. The Germans now are bringing up the guns to make the attack on the French. If the British send men soon they will take the hill once again from the Germans, for the Germans have not yet men enough here to hold it against a strong attack. I am one day orderly, and I hear the officers say these things."

John realized that this was valuable and important information. He listened to all the guard had to say, for with the promise of escape he might be in position to carry back with him sufficient of the German plans and disposition of troops to put the British and French upon their guard.

They were on the lower slope of the ridge now, and close to the front line held by the British before the morning attack began. The trenches at the base of the hill had been subjected to the same terrific bombardment as the slope above. Great sections were broken down, and mingled with the soil were the bodies of many of the men who had defended them.

The guard stooped and examined the interior of a dugout, the front of which had been partially demolished by a shell. The doorway was nearly closed with débris, but there was room enough to admit a man crawling upon hands and knees. He arose, looked about him, and satisfied they were not observed, directed:

"This it vill hide you. Go in at vonce, quick."

John obeyed, and was followed by the guard. As his eyes became accustomed to the semidarkness of the underground retreat he could see that the roof timbers at the front were shattered and hanging dangerously. In the rear, however, was ample room. He also

observed a passageway leading from one side of the dugout, doubtless connecting it with another compartment.

The occupants had apparently been at breakfast when the bombardment began. Some mess kits with remnants of food in them and a kettle partly filled with tea stood on a rude table improvised from boxes. An oil stove lay on its side, thrown over, doubtless, by the force of the explosion.

"It iss a goot place to stay. It will not be seen and no one vill come," observed the guard after a critical inspection of the entrance. "Now you vill dress my arm?"

The guard removed his coat, and with the aid of his pocket knife John stripped the left sleeve of the man's shirt from his arm. It was clotted with blood, and an examination disclosed the fact that a rifle bullet had passed through the fleshy part of the upper arm, but with apparently no injury to the bone.

"It isn't bad," John announced. "It'll soon be well if no infection sets in. I should have some clean water to wash it with."

"Let us look," and the guard searching

among the débris and refuse uncovered a bucket. "You vill wait once till I come again."

He looked cautiously out, and then taking the bucket disappeared.

John immediately took advantage of the guard's absence to explore the passageway. At the end of ten feet it spread into an open space. At this distance from the entrance no light filtered through, and John scratched a match. As it blazed up and partially illuminated the interior there was disclosed to him a mass of wreckage. The roof in the rear, however, was still supported by splintered posts, and on the floor, partly covered with earth, lay the prostrate figure of a man in British khaki. John was about to strike another match, but he heard a movement in the outer dugout, and returned to find the guard entering with a bucket of cold water.

"There's a man in there!" John exclaimed excitedly. "I think he's dead. The roof has fallen in!"

"So? Ve vill see him. But first you vill bind up my arm once."

John cleansed an empty dish belonging to an abandoned mess kit, dipped some water into it from the bucket, and after washing the wound thoroughly applied some iodine and bound the arm from materials supplied by the soldier from his kit.

"Now ve vill look once at the dead man inside," said the guard, donning his coat. "Ve should dake him outside. He vill not make us happy if ve must stay a long time, and it may be two—three days, maybe a week," he shrugged his shoulders, "I cannot say."

He proceeded to wrap a rag which he found in a corner around the end of a stick, poured some coal oil over it from a can doubtless used as a supply for the overturned stove, and turning into the passage paused to light the saturated rag, which blazed and proved an excellent torch.

John followed him into the inner chamber where the man lay half buried beneath fallen timbers and earth, and stooping in the light of the torch to remove the débris, he was startled by the voice of the supposed corpse calmly saying:

"I couldn't get the stuff off, don't you know. I think I'll be quite all right when you dig me out."

"We'll dig you out, mate," John assured excitedly.

Somewhere he had heard that voice before! As he attacked the earth and débris that held the victim prisoner, working with his characteristic energy, he asked himself over and over again where he had heard the voice and who the man could be? Presently the man's shoulders were free, and then, with the guard's assistance, his legs, and they helped him to his feet.

"Thank you, men. That's better. I was quite knocked out for a time, don't you know, and when I got my senses I thought I was done for. A beastly fix for a chap to be in, don't you know."

"It was goot ve find you alive already and not dead yet," observed the guard. "Now you will be my prisoner also."

As they made their way through the passage to the outer dugout John was more certain than ever that he knew the voice, and

when he faced the rescued man in the better light, he exclaimed, in delight:

“Blick! Lieutenant Blake!”

“Adney, upon my word!” and Lieutenant Blake seized John’s hand, no less pleased at the meeting than was John. “Why, Adney, how did you get here?” Then observing John’s uniform, he continued: “In the Ambulance Service! Upon my word! I’m quite astonished, don’t you know!”

“The *Gorgonia* was torpedoed,” John explained. “I got a little cut on the shoulder, and after we were rescued they took me to a hospital in Brest, and when I got out of the hospital I came into the service. My car was caught in the barrage this morning. One of my friends—” John’s voice choked as he spoke of Billy’s terrible death—“was killed and I was taken prisoner.”

“Upon my word! Then we’re prisoners together! Sorry they caught you, Adney, but it’s the fortune of war. I’m glad I fell in with you though. You’ll get us out of trouble if you’re the same whirlwind you were when you captured me in London.” Lieutenant Blake

laughed heartily at the recollection. "I take it the Germans have captured our trenches?"

"Yes," said John. "They drove our troops down the other side of the ridge, but I think they've fallen back to the top of the ridge again."

"I'll take a bit of a look outside," Lieutenant Blake suggested. "I'd like to see how things are going, don't you know."

"I dink no," the guard objected, taking a position with his rifle at the entrance of the dugout. "I dink you vill stay here already. I haff again changed my mind once more. I am of Saxony, and the fighting I do not like. I dink once I let you go und myself be a prisoner mit the British, und haff no more of the fighting. Now I dink I keep you prisoner, und sometime when it iss better for me I make myself a prisoner mit the French, which for me already iss better than the British to be a prisoner mit. I vill keep you both my prisoners, und maybe I get the iron cross, und maybe a sergeant also I get me to be. Dake off your pistol once und hand him to me the butt first."

The guard's rifle was pointing toward Lieutenant Blake's breast. There was no doubt he would execute his threat to shoot if any resistance were offered, and with a wry face Lieutenant Blake complied with the demand and surrendered his automatic pistol.

This sudden change of mind on the part of the guard ended John's hope of an early escape, and his heart sank as he saw Lieutenant Blake's pistol change possession. This decision of the German, John was aware, was due to the prospect that the capture of Lieutenant Blake, an officer in the British Army, would possibly bring him a reward, and also to the fact that the guard doubtless judged it much more difficult and dangerous to assist two to escape than one.

Carelessness, or, more likely, the man's natural dullness and heaviness of temperament had caused him to wholly neglect searching John for arms. John was an ambulance driver, and he perhaps took it for granted that John carried no arms because of the death penalty imposed upon Red Cross or ambulance men captured with weapons upon their

persons. In his pocket, within his reach, was the automatic pistol given him by the spy, Smith, and the remembrance of this carried with it a degree of hope.

"This is awkward now, most awkward, don't you know. Let us talk it over," suggested Lieutenant Blake, adopting a wheedling tone toward the guard, and speaking much as he would have spoken to a child. "Let us see if we cannot arrange some way by which the three of us can reach the British lines."

"I dink no." The German with rifle lowered was standing near the entrance of the dugout. "I dink ve go und I gif you prisoners up. One I could show to get away maybe if he do not get shot. Two prisoners if I dake them will be much help mit me and gif me the iron cross und maybe make me sergeant. For me it iss goot to dake a British officer prisoner. I dink ve go now."

"See here," John argued, "you told me you would let me go and show me how to get away. It is up to you to keep your word."

"I do not understand, 'up to me'."

"You made me a promise, and I thought soldiers always did as they said they'd do."

"It iss different mit us now again. I will dake you a prisoner in," the man stubbornly insisted.

"Did you change your mind because we found Lieutenant Blake?" John asked.

"I dink so," confessed the guard. "I tell you it iss goot for me to dake a prisoner in once who iss an officer of the British."

"Why not dake me then, and let my friend return?" Lieutenant Blake generously suggested.

"Well, maybe," the guard scratched his head and pondered for a moment. "It iss not much for me to dake in a prisoner who iss of the ambulance."

"Very well, then, take me," Lieutenant Blake, who was standing in the rear of the dugout, made a step forward.

"No!" broke in John. "You can't go alone! If this man won't let us escape as he promised, I'll take luck with you."

"That won't help me, don't you know, Adney," Lieutenant Blake objected. "It won't

make it any easier for me if you are made prisoner and you may as well get away if you can."

"I dink I will dake you both once," the guard decided. "I vill not dake one and leave the other or dake one and leave one."

Lieutenant Blake had been edging toward the guard, who suddenly covered him again with the rifle.

"Listen to reason, my man," Lieutenant Blake sat down leisurely and with an air of little concern, which served to reassure the guard, who again lowered his rifle. "Let us talk it over now, and be good friends."

"Ve haff reasoned him over already once. Ve must go." The guard stepped aside to permit a passage to the doorway, and commanded, "You vill go both of you ahead."

"Stand where you are! Throw up your hands!"

The guard was looking into John's automatic pistol. His rifle clattered to the ground, his hands shot up above his head, his face bore an expression of mingled surprise and fear, and he exclaimed, imploringly:

"Kamerad!"

"Now, you're our prisoner. We won't hurt you if you keep quiet, and make no trouble. Keep your hands up while Lieutenant Blake searches you."

Lieutenant Blake's first care was to recover his own pistol. Then he searched the German for other weapons, relieved the man of his supply of rifle cartridges and took possession of the rifle.

"Put your hands down now and step back here!" John commanded, indicating to the German the rear of the dugout. The man complied meekly.

"Cleverly done, Adney," and there was a whimsical smile on Lieutenant Blake's face. "Is it the same pistol you had in London?"

"Yes," said John, "but I made a fool of myself that day."

"Not at all! Not at all!" protested Lieutenant Blake. "You were doing what you thought your duty. Now you have a real prisoner, and have him inside the German lines. We shall have to plan our campaign rather carefully or he won't be your prisoner

long and we shall be prisoners ourselves and in earnest."

"What shall we do?" asked John rather helplessly. "If we go outside they'll surely catch or kill us. From what I've heard of German prisons I don't want to get in one."

"We won't let them take us," suggested Lieutenant Blake. "We'll wait till night, and then see how things look. I fancy we'll have a bit of fighting to do, and the chances will all be against us, don't you know. From what I've seen of you, Adney, I'm sure you'll be willing to take chances."

"I'm afraid," John admitted, "but I'll do anything you think best, and I'll stay with you, whatever happens."

"Very well, then," Lieutenant Blake smiled, "we'll plan our attack, with the prospect that we'll have the whole German Army to fight. We'll make a mark for ourselves whatever happens."

CHAPTER XIX

STEALING THROUGH THE GERMAN LINES

LIEUTENANT BLAKE consulted his watch.

"It's ten o'clock," he announced. "We've a good while to wait. You might lie down, Adney, and rest a bit. We must stay here till dark, don't you know, and we must be at our best. I'll look after the fellow."

"I couldn't sleep now," John objected. "I'm too excited. Won't you rest a little, Lieutenant Blake? Perhaps I'll feel more like it later."

"No thank you, Adney. I had a fine night's sleep."

"I vill tell you vat I do," interrupted the German. "I haff change my mind once again. I dink I vill make of myself a prisoner mit the British. I am tired mit all the fighting."

"You are doing jolly well to change your mind," smiled Lieutenant Blake. "You're a

prisoner already, don't you know, and it will be well for you to be a good prisoner. You're going to help Adney and me get back to the British lines, you see, and you're going with us. If you don't help us, things will go a bit hard for you."

"Well, I dink so," said the German, in a phlegmatic, matter-of-course tone. "Let me tell you, once, vat I do. I vill go me out ven it gets dark tonight, und dake from some Germans off their uniforms, und I vill bring the uniforms here. You vill put the German uniforms on once, over the ones you now already wear. Maybe I vill find me a coat mit a sergeant. Then ve three vill go to the trenches on the hill, just like ve vas all German soldiers already. I vill be sergeant, und you vill both be soldiers mit me, und I vill do the speaking und you vill not be speaking. If you speak once you vill already be known not to be Germans, und you vill be killed once for having on you the German uniform, und it vill be no goot for you to be killed.

"From the place ve vill be in ve vill go

oud in vat you call him, No Man's Land, und go to the British trenches, und you vill say to the British not to shood, und ve vill be safe, und I vill make of myself a prisoner mit the British."

"A good way, my man, for you to slip away," objected Lieutenant Blake. "But the plan isn't so bad, on the whole, don't you know covering ourselves with German uniforms. Not half bad."

"I vill not go away," protested the German earnestly. "I vill come back mit the German uniforms, und ve vill all go together."

"I'm afraid when you come back the uniforms will be on the backs of live German soldiers," insisted Lieutenant Blake. "You're scheming to turn us over, for your glory. That would be unpleasant for all of us, don't you know, for Adney and I would fight. We won't go out of here as prisoners, and we don't want any bombs thrown in on us, and your life depends upon our success in getting out of the German lines safely."

"I tell you once I haff changed my mind already," the German insisted. "I am to be

a prisoner mit the British, und how could I be a prisoner mit the British if I do so the vay you dink I maybe do. No, I vill come back alone mit the uniforms from dead Germans."

"It's a pretty good place, Fritz——"

"My name it iss not Fritz," interrupted the German, "it iss Hans, und Hans iss a goot name already. You vill call me Hans."

"Your plan isn't half bad, Hans," Lieutenant Blake continued, "but you've changed your mind several times already during our short acquaintance, and I'm afraid you'll change it again, don't you know. I'll go out myself and borrow uniforms from Germans that have no further use for them."

"They'll shoot or capture you," warned John. "It isn't safe to go out in broad daylight in your uniform."

"Oh, but I'll not go now. I'll wait till dark, don't you know," Lieutenant Blake assured.

"Und you may meet soldiers in the dark, und if they halt you up you can only speak English, und they vill know you are not Ger-

man," suggested Hans, adding solemnly, "then it will be that you will be shot already."

"Don't trouble yourself about me, Hans," Lieutenant Blake grinned. "I know how badly you'd feel if I were killed by some German blighter, don't you know, but I can speak German very well, and I've formed the habit of taking pretty good care of myself. I say, Adney, you had better lie down and get a wink of sleep now."

"Very well," John yielded, "but I'm not sleepy. "I suppose I'll be in better shape tonight if I can sleep some though, for I didn't get much rest last night."

With his coat for a pillow, John stretched himself upon the dugout floor, and turned his back to his companions. His brain was awlirl with the many happenings since his call to duty the night before, but presently fatigue conquered, and with the din of battle in his ears he fell asleep. It was late in the afternoon when he awoke, and sat up, to find Lieutenant Blake brewing tea over the oil stove, and Hans snoring peacefully in a corner.

"I've nearly slept my head off," said he, sitting up. "What time is it?"

"Good evening, Adney. It's half after four," Lieutenant Blake greeted. "You did have a jolly good sleep. I'm brewing a pot of tea, and I found a bit to eat. Some odds and ends, don't you know. It isn't much, but for hungry men not so bad. A tin of beef and some bread. We'll have a bite and a sup, and leave some of it for Hans to eat when he wakes. He'll not be so likely to change his mind again, don't you know, if he has something in his stomach."

"I'm hungry as a horse," John asserted, as he joined Lieutenant Blake. "How has Hans been behaving?"

"He's been sleeping. Perhaps his conscience is easier since he finds he's leaving his friends through compulsion and not as a deserter. He's jolly well tired of fighting—there's no doubt of that—but even so we can't trust him. We can't trust any of the blighters, don't you know. There was the second steward on the *Gorgonia* you trusted so completely that you were ready to fight for him."

"Did you ever hear anything more of him?" asked John, whose resentment toward the second steward was revived by the recollection of the *Gorgonia* experience and the London escapade.

"That's what brought me to this front," said Lieutenant Blake, and, assuring himself that Hans was asleep, added: "I'm reasonably sure he's operating in this vicinity. Let me pour you some tea, Adney."

"Do you mean you've seen him again?" asked John, holding up a tin cup for tea, while Lieutenant Blake filled it.

"No, not that," explained Lieutenant Blake. "I searched the places he'd be likely to get ashore, don't you know, if it happened no Hun boat picked him up, and I learned that he actually did get ashore. Then I traced him by various methods that I won't trouble you by explaining, to the Channel boat and into Paris. There he seems to have disguised himself. But he's not idle. I'm working along the front here looking for him, and some day I'll run across him. It'll lead to promotion for me if I catch the blighter, and

I want to catch him for his own sake, don't you know."

"You think he's disguised himself?" asked John.

"Assuredly! He wouldn't dare stop inside our lines otherwise."

"What sort of a disguise?"

"Now, really, that's hard to say, don't you know. There are no end of disguises he might adopt. It depends upon what sort of mischief he's doing. He may be an officer in our army, collecting information that he's putting over to the Germans, or he may be passing as a French peasant. I'm rather expecting that he's serving as an officer in our lines."

Hans opened his eyes, yawned, stretched, and most deliberately sat up. Immediately he sensed the fact that his companions were eating, a look of appreciation spread over his face, and he observed:

"I was hungry yet myself."

"We've saved something for you," Lieutenant Blake reassured. "I never saw a German that wasn't hungry."

"It was so, already," Hans grinned.

"I think," suggested Lieutenant Blake, when Hans had eaten, "you'd better take off those clothes you're wearing. They won't fit me very well, but if I wear them I won't be quite so conspicuous as in my own uniform."

Hans protested vigorously, but Lieutenant Blake was firm, and most reluctantly Hans undressed, while Lieutenant Blake proceeded to transform himself into an excellent imitation of a German private.

"How do I look, Adney?" he asked, when the change was completed.

"I'd think you were a Boche if I met you," John laughed.

"Und I vould dink you vas a German," volunteered Hans.

"Then I'll be comparatively safe," laughed Lieutenant Blake. "I'm going out before it gets too dark, so as to get my bearings."

Had there been an opportunity for him to express himself, Hans would doubtless have again changed his mind. As it was, he sat sullen and silent, his beady eyes expressing anything but good nature, while Lieutenant

Blake and John discussed their plans and their coming adventure.

"I say, Adney," Lieutenant Blake suggested, as evening gloom began to settle, "you'll need some light in here to see that Hans doesn't do anything unruly. I think there are some candles in the rubbish in the other dugout where you found me. I'll look."

A torch was made similar to the one Hans had used when he and John explored the inner compartment, and with the light Lieutenant Blake entered the passageway. A few minutes later he reappeared with two candles, and handing them to John announced:

"I'm going now, Adney. I've left a candle burning in the other dugout, and you'd better take Hans in there now. If you're in there the glow of the light won't be seen outside through the entrance, don't you know. It isn't as pleasant a place as this, but I'll probably not be long. Wait there till I come."

"All right," John agreed.

Without further ado Lieutenant Blake crowded through the entrance, and John was again alone with Hans. At his direction Hans

preceded him into the inner dugout, and seated himself upon the rubbish at the farther end, while John took a position at the end of the passageway.

John's nerves were at a high tension. Hans, divested of his uniform, lapsed into sullen and resentful silence, and finally stretching himself, lay back upon the débris and was presently asleep. When an hour had passed John could hardly resist the temptation to return to the outer compartment and crawl through the entrance in the hope that he might see Lieutenant Blake. But he realized that in the night outside he would be unable to recognize his friend, and might reveal their hiding place to the enemy. He had the responsibility, too, of the prisoner, and should Hans awake and discover himself unguarded he might escape and cause unnecessary trouble. Another hour passed, and another. The suspense was becoming unbearable, when John heard a low whistle in the outer dugout. His heart leaped with relief as he hurried into the passageway and Lieutenant Blake's voice greeted him.

"I'm back, Adney. Light a candle. I'll cover the entrance and we won't be seen."

John nervously lighted one of the candles, and in its flicker discovered Lieutenant Blake with two German rifles, and the uniforms which were to disguise them.

"Sorry I was so long," he apologized, as he proceeded to close the entrance with the box which had served them as a table. "I had to burrow around a bit to get decent things, and then I did some reconnoitering to make out how the land lay. How has Hans behaved?"

"Sleeping most of the time, and asleep now. I'm mighty glad to see you. I was getting nervous; I was afraid they had taken you in."

"No," Lieutenant Blake laughed. "I had a bit of a pinch once, but I speak German like a native, and I made out. Now we'll have to hurry. I've a sergeant's blouse for Hans. That'll make him feel better."

With Lieutenant Blake's assistance John quickly appeared as a German private, from heavy boots to metal helmet. His shoes and leather puttees were of necessity to be dis-

carded, but the German uniform was a much better fit worn over his ambulance uniform, which was retained. Then he was instructed in the manipulation of the German rifle.

"There," declared Lieutenant Blake, "the Kaiser himself would think you one of his men. All you'll have to do is to follow us and not speak a word. Now we'll call Hans."

Hans was still sullen and grouchy, but when he discovered that he was to be transformed temporarily into a sergeant he became more amiable, and entered into the plans quite as though he, like John and Lieutenant Blake, was making his escape, and was no part of the German Army.

"I dink," said he, when he was fully equipped, "ve better not try already to go oud over the hill yet. I dink ve vork off to the trench vere the French are on the other side, and not the British. If ve go on the hill ve may come on some of my company, and they know already I am not a sergeant, und they know you are not of my company."

"You mean," asked Lieutenant Blake, "go

to the eastward, opposite the French lines, before attempting to leave the German lines."

"Yah, I mean so," said Hans.

"That is a good plan," Lieutenant Blake agreed. "There's a chance you might be recognized here by some of your company, if we happen to run into them. We'll do as you say. Now you're to carry a rifle, Hans, but it won't be loaded, and you're to keep just ahead of Adney and me. Do you understand?"

"Yah; I know."

"And you're to say no word and give no sign that will arouse suspicion of who you are. If you do I'll shoot you on the spot."

"Yah."

"And if I have to shoot you'll be a dead German. Do you understand that?"

"Yah; I know."

"Now we'll have some tea, and get away at once."

John was nervously excited, and more anxious to enter upon the adventure than to drink tea, but Lieutenant Blake, with methodical deliberation, and quite as though the happen-

ings were an everyday occurrence, lighted the oil stove, brewed the tea, and chatted and sipped with no more outward show of perturbation than he would have exhibited on a peaceful afternoon in his home in London. This served to steady John's nerves.

It was midnight when finally they crawled from the dugout, John in advance, then Hans, and in the rear Lieutenant Blake. The stars were shining, and the fresh air, in contrast to the close, damp atmosphere of the dugout, was refreshing. Intermittent artillery fire was in progress, with now and again the rattle of machine guns and rifles. This, however, had already become so commonplace to John that he scarcely heard it.

Here Hans was placed in advance, and instructed to lead the way, with renewed warning on the part of Lieutenant Blake, who followed at his heels, that any suspicious actions or treachery would be observed and promptly punished.

John was in the rear. Hans led them down the hill and within the lines held by the Germans before the morning attack. Presently

they turned into a road that led eastward. Munition wagons, guns, and troops thronged the road. Once they were halted by an arrogant young officer. Hans explained in German that with two privates he was detailed for special duty under orders from the colonel of his regiment. The officer permitted them to proceed.

Presently Hans guided them upon a cross-road where now and again they were challenged by sentries. Finally they found themselves in trenches. No one questioned or doubted the fact that they were German soldiers. Their uniforms and make-up appeared a perfect pass.

Hans paused to explain that they were now opposite the French, and that they would soon be in the front trench.

“Und ven ve already get there,” said he, “ve vill go oud on vat you call it, No Man’s Land, und I make myself a prisoner mit the French, if I am not killed already once.”

Then they wound on, and five minutes later came upon the men on guard upon the steps, and a major peering with his glasses out to-

ward the French lines. Hans mounted the step a little way from the officer, and John and Lieutenant Blake followed. At that moment an illuminating bomb was discharged from the French side, and in its light John saw in the distance a stone house on a hill. It gave him a thrill as he recognized it as the house in which Lieutenant Duclos made his headquarters, on the outskirts of the village. As the illumination of the bomb faded, he faintly discerned a light in an upper window. Several times it faded and reappeared, and at last was extinguished. The major near by turned to his orderly, and Lieutenant Blake heard him say:

"Tell Colonel Steinbach that munition trains and troops will be moving forward on the east road at eleven o'clock tomorrow night."

As the major moved away John said to Lieutenant Blake, quite forgetting precaution in his excitement:

"That's the house where the head of our section has his headquarters. We're close to the village."



They had hardly reached the German wire entanglements
when an illuminating bomb was sent up

Soldiers standing near turned sharply upon him. They had heard the English words. One of them brought up his rifle to cover John, but a blow from the butt of Lieutenant Blake's rifle brought him down. Hans was already out of the trench. John and Lieutenant Blake followed.

With that rifle bullets began to whistle around them, and they had hardly reached the German wire entanglements when an illuminating bomb was sent up.

"Lie flat, as though you were dead, and don't move a muscle for your life," Lieutenant Blake cautioned.

The three threw themselves flat upon the ground, and they had scarcely done so when a machine gun began to spray its bullets into the wire entanglement directly over their heads. There was commotion in the trench twenty yards behind them. None of the three spoke or moved, and none knew whether the thick-flying bullets had found his companions. John could almost hear his heart beat. Every instant he expected to be hit, and he bitterly accused himself for his indiscretion.

There seemed no escape. He was sure they would be killed or captured, and capture in the disguise they wore must lead to certain condemnation and death as spies.

CHAPTER XX

ALONE IN NO MAN'S LAND

THE rifle and machine-gun fire from the German trenches quickly called forth answering fire from the French. This fortunately served to prevent the Germans from immediately sending out a patrol to capture the three fugitives, who, doubtless, they believed to be spies. For nearly thirty minutes, which seemed like hours to John, a hail of German bullets continued to pass over his head, while illuminating bombs made any movement impossible without detection. The three men lay flat against the ground. Fortunately the green gray of their uniforms, melting into the earth, rendered them invisible to those in the trenches, and for the moment protected their hiding place.

The firing and the continuous discharge of illuminating bombs gradually subsided, and presently John became aware that Lieutenant Blake was crawling forward along the face

of the wire entanglement. With vast relief he followed, resuming his flattened position upon the ground whenever an occasional bomb was fired, and lying still until the light of the bomb faded from the sky.

He had thus crawled for perhaps a hundred yards when Lieutenant Blake turned to the right, and following him John discovered to his joy an opening through the entanglements and out into No Man's Land.

Now they were able to move more rapidly. A little farther, and Hans rose to his feet and ran forward followed by Lieutenant Blake and John. Almost immediately, however, a bomb suddenly lighted the sky. A hail of bullets drove them into a shell hole, which fortunately offered shelter. Here they found temporary respite, and time to breathe, and were able to sit erect in comparative safety.

"Are you all right, Adney?" asked Lieutenant Blake.

"Right as can be. They never touched me. How are you?" John asked.

"Quite all right. We made a jolly good run for it, didn't we?"

"I'm all right mit me, too," broke in Hans. "Once again I thought I vas hit already. But no, it vas dirt from a bullet, und my hand it came out against it."

"You did jolly well, don't you know, Hans, to come on with us," said Lieutenant Blake. "I thought when we had the set-to out in the trench, and I quieted that fellow with the butt of my rifle, you might change your mind again, and help him capture us."

"I vill not change my mind mit me again. I am now a prisoner mit you, und you make of me a sergeant. The Germans would make of me a private once again, und to them it would not be vell for me to be seen mit a sergeant's coat on."

"Yes, I see; you'd have been in trouble for promoting yourself, if they'd caught you," Lieutenant Blake laughed, quietly, "and also for leaving your own command without leave," he added.

"Yah, that it iss."

"I caused all of our trouble by losing my head, and talking," said John contritely. "We'd likely have got well away from the

German lines without being discovered as enemies, if I had kept still."

"We got away anyhow, so don't let that trouble you," assured Lieutenant Blake. "Now, we'll have to get to the French lines without their shooting us for German raiders. I take it we're half way over."

"Hadn't we better leave our German uniforms in this shell hole?" John suggested. "We won't need to be Germans any longer, will we?"

"That's a good idea, don't you know! I didn't think of it, and it's jolly well we kept our own clothes on under these."

John and Lieutenant Blake proceeded to divest themselves of their borrowed garments, save the German helmets, which they were obliged to retain, as they had no others. Then Lieutenant Blake consulted his watch in the light of an illuminating bomb.

"Two o'clock," said he. "We've done well don't you know."

"We're just opposite the village where our ambulance headquarters are stationed," suggested John. "That's what I was telling you

when we were in the German trench. The stone house we saw on the hill, with the lights moving in the window, is the headquarters of our section commander."

"The stone house!" exclaimed Lieutenant Blake, immediately interested. "Someone was signaling the Germans with those lights in the window. They were disclosing the movement of our troops and munition trains. It's jolly well I know German for I heard the German major who was reading the signals, send the information to his commanding officer. Is your commander an American?"

"No," said John, his heart beating fast with a sudden revelation, "he's a French lieutenant—Lieutenant Duclos. Do you know, I believe he's the second steward!"

John proceeded to explain the appearance of Lieutenant Duclos, and his striking resemblance to the spy, Smith.

"That's interesting," observed Lieutenant Blake. "I've no doubt you're right. And we'll catch our man, if it's he. A jolly good night's work, if we do, don't you know."

The firing on both sides had ceased, and

normal quiet again prevailed, and upon Lieutenant Blake's direction, Hans now set out from the shell hole, Lieutenant Blake and John following.

Directly after leaving the shell hole an illuminating bomb burst above them. John threw himself down, and when he lifted his head after the light had faded from the sky he could see nothing of Lieutenant Blake or Hans. He turned in different directions in the hope of finding them waiting for him. He listened intently for a movement which might indicate the direction they had taken. He stood up and walked about, risking discovery. But there was no sound or movement to guide him. Lieutenant Blake and Hans seemed to have been swallowed up by the earth. Then he realized that he had not only lost them, but had also lost the direction to the French lines.

He took refuge in a convenient shell hole. Here he was free to sit up and look about him without danger of attracting attention. The respite permitted him to quiet his fears and gain control of the growing panic that

had threatened him upon finding himself deserted. He had instinctively followed the woodsman's rule to halt when lost, and remain quiet until relative directions might be located with reasonable certainty.

"It's like the river drive," he assured himself. "I always kept my head and nerves there, and it got me out of tight places. I didn't even get scared there and I mustn't be scared here. That's all I've got to do now, and I'll be all right. There isn't really much danger if I keep my head."

Then he tried to picture to himself the situation. The French were on the south side of No Man's Land, the Germans on the north side, unless there was a sharp turn in the trenches, which was unlikely. If he could determine the directions he could continue toward the French even more safely alone than in the company of Lieutenant Blake and Hans. He had stalked game and he had learned to wriggle over the ground as silently as an Indian. Hans was clumsy, and on nearly every occasion when they had been seen it had been due to the noise made by

the German. Once near the French trenches he could call, and they would admit him; and he felt quite confident that Lieutenant Blake was capable of taking care of himself and would be able to reach the French side in safety.

These considerations gave him fresh courage and renewed confidence. From the depths of the shell hole he studied the sky, and quickly located the big dipper and Polaris. Out there in the dreary shell hole of No Man's Land he recognized and hailed the little twinkling star as an old friend. It was the same never-failing guide that had often shown him the way through his own beloved forests of far-away Minnesota

Suddenly he became aware of a movement near him, and he lay back against the shell hole and held his breath while he listened. There was silence save for the distant booming of guns. He had nearly decided that he had been victimized by his imagination, when he distinctly heard a guttural whisper. Directly above him, and almost within reach of his hand, standing out against the sky line,

appeared the crouching figure of a man. In a moment the man disappeared, and John breathed easier. But almost immediately the outline reappeared on the opposite side of the shell hole, hesitated for an instant as though uncertain, and slid into the shell hole, followed by another and another until John counted nine.

Beads of cold perspiration stood out on John's forehead. Nine German soldiers were within fifteen feet of where he crouched. His slightest movement, even his breathing, might discover him to them. Should an illuminating bomb light the sky, as was likely at any moment, they could not fail to see him; and they would certainly detect his presence should they cross the shell hole, which they would probably do in leaving.

They would doubtless kill him on the spot, or, if they chose to take him prisoner he had no doubt he would be promptly condemned to death as a spy, for he had been seen within the German lines disguised as a German soldier.

It was an emergency that called for a cool

head and steady nerves. The Germans were talking in low tones. He could hear them distinctly. Although he could understand nothing they said, he had no doubt they had been sent out for the purpose of capturing himself and his companions.

John was conscious of all the possibilities. The fear that had almost paralyzed him when the Germans appeared on the rim of the shell hole a moment before quickly left him. His brain was clear and keen. He realized this, and marveled. It was the peculiar, fatalistic coolness that sometimes comes to men in the hour of extreme danger. He recognized it as a mental condition he had once experienced in breaking a log jam, at the moment when they released the key log and the great mass of timber towering above him began to move with a threat of instant death. His life then had depended upon prompt decision and instant action, else he would have been crushed. A flash of panic swept over him, then all fear disappeared and he saved himself.

Now, he reasoned, if he took the initiative before his presence in the shell hole was dis-

covered, he would have the advantage, at least of surprising them, and he would have a chance to fight for his life. At any rate, it would be better to die fighting than to permit himself to be killed like a rat in a hole.

With all the caution born of his wilderness training, he moved his hand noiselessly to his hip pocket and grasped the butt of his automatic pistol. Without haste he drew the pistol slowly from the pocket. His action was that of a panther preparing to spring upon its prey, gathering and attuning its muscles for a rapid, crashing leap.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FIGHT IN THE SHELL HOLE

“**SURRENDER!**” John shouted as he drew his automatic. “I’ve got you covered! Don’t move!”

There was the crack of a rifle. John felt a sting in his left shoulder, and the impact and shock of a bullet nearly knocked him down. More bullets followed and spatted into the earth around him. He quickly regained his balance, and began pulling the trigger of his automatic.

Suddenly a man exclaimed “Ug-h-h!” and there was the sound of a gun tumbling to the ground, followed by a chorus of appealing voices shouting:

“*Kamerad! Kamerad!*”

As John held his fire an illuminating bomb revealed to him a German soldier standing erect and holding his face with his two hands while blood trickled between his fingers.

Stretched upon the ground, face down, and still shouting "*Kamerad!*" were seven other Germans, and sitting in their midst, and grinning with joy, no other than Lieutenant Blake.

"Don't move!" ordered John. "If one of you moves a finger I'll kill you!"

It was unlikely that many of the Germans understood John's words, but they did understand their import, and not one of them moved from the position where he had thrown himself when John opened fire with his automatic. The sergeant in command of the squad had alone remained upon his feet and fired when John, in the darkness, ordered them to surrender, and one of John's bullets had found its mark in his face.

The firing had called forth a succession of illuminating bombs. This was fortunate, for while the men in the depth of the shell hole were out of the range of vision of either the French or German trenches, the bombs gave ample light for John and Lieutenant Blake to observe every movement of their prisoners and to guard against treachery, while the former covered them with his automatic and

the latter removed beyond their reach rifles and other arms and searched them for concealed weapons.

"Jolly well done, don't you know, Adney!" commended Lieutenant Blake, when the prisoners were examined to his satisfaction. "Hans and I lost you, and crawled right in among these fellows. We hadn't a chance to get away. You're a whirlwind, Adney, as I've said before. You've captured seven prisoners besides Hans, eight in all, and you'll have credit for it. What's the matter, Adney?"

"Just a little faint," said John, sitting down. "I believe I'm hit in the shoulder."

"Rest for a bit. You'll be all right."

Hans was sitting up now, and Lieutenant Blake, who had recovered his own pistol and was guarding the prisoners, ordered the others to sit up also, while he proceeded to question them. The illuminating bombs had faded from the sky, but the first hint of early summer dawn was visible in the east. There was need for haste. To be caught in the midst of No Man's Land in the broad light of day was

not a pleasant prospect. John realized this, and presently he suggested:

"I'm feeling all right now, Lieutenant Blake. Hadn't we better be going?"

"If you're quite all right, Adney, we had," agreed Lieutenant Blake. "It would be a bit unpleasant out here in daylight, don't you know; and we've this lot of blighters on our hands."

"Then let's go," said John.

Even now, as they emerged from the shell hole with the prisoners before them, concealment of their movements was difficult, and several times they were forced to lie flat while scattering shots passed over their heads. An upright or even a stooping position was quite too dangerous and unpractical to risk, and they and their prisoners were compelled to crawl.

Once one of the prisoners declined to proceed farther, when they were temporarily in the shelter of a hummock, but Lieutenant Blake's pistol pressed against his side quickly induced him to change his mind and go on.

After much tedious crawling, which was

exceedingly painful for John's wounded shoulder, and with many halts, they reached the French wire entanglements. Dawn was growing. No opening to permit a passage could be seen. A brisk artillery fire had begun. French and German shells were screaming overhead. John's shoulder throbbed and he was famishing with thirst.

Lieutenant Blake hailed the French trenches. There was no immediate reply. Then he hailed again, and an answer came in broken English.

"I'm Lieutenant Blake of the British Army. I'm with ambulance driver, Adney, of the American Ambulance Service. He has eight prisoners to deliver."

Then John called:

"We can't find the way through the wire!"

"Just hold your hosses, pardner! I'm com-in' out to help you!" came the response.

John's heart bounded. Bronk was in the French trench and had heard them! Dear old Bronk! The sound of his voice almost brought tears to John's eyes. He felt stronger with the assurance. Nothing would stand in

Bronk's way! He would dare the whole German Army!

"Just you keep still where you be, Kid!" Bronk called. "I'm comin' with a Frenchy that knows the course to help steer us, but we can't hurry!"

John and Lieutenant Blake lay flat to the ground with their prisoners and waited. It seemed a long while to John before, at last, he saw Bronk and a French soldier emerge through an opening in the wire entanglement fifty yards away, both crawling like snakes upon the ground.

Probably to ascertain their position, the French soldier lifted his head and shoulders a little above the ground. Instantly there was the crack of a rifle, and the blue-clad figure fell in a crumpled heap. A German sniper, lying in hiding, had shot him.

Bronk paused in his crawling and wormed around. John saw him remove his helmet, place it upon a stick, and lift it. Almost immediately there was another crack of a rifle, and the helmet dropped. For several minutes Bronk lay close to the ground, and John's

heart sank, for he had no doubt his friend had been killed. Presently, however, he observed a movement of Bronk's right arm. Suddenly there was a flash and Bronk raised his head a little, a broad grin on his face.

"I got that feller, Kid," he called. "He won't do any more shootin', leastways not right off."

"Stay where you are, my man," Lieutenant Blake directed. "We'll move these men down to you."

"All right, if you don't need a hand," answered Bronk. "This Frenchy seems to be hit bad. I've got to take him back. I'll wait here."

The prisoners, upon command, moved forward, and were soon at the opening in the entanglement. Bronk was already dragging the wounded French soldier through. The prisoners followed, the wounded sergeant complaining constantly in guttural mutterings.

Once beyond the wire entanglements Bronk arose boldly, lifted the wounded French soldier upon his shoulders and ran forward to

the trenches. A hail of German bullets crossed No Man's Land and whistled around him. John expected every moment to see his friend fall, but Bronk reached the cover of the French trenches in safety.

"If he could do that, you fellows can. Get up and run for it!" Lieutenant Blake commanded. "Your friends won't shoot at you. No more crawling!"

The prisoners at first declined to obey, declaring they would all be killed. To add force to the objection Hans plead:

"It vill be safer already yet to crawl once again. Let us crawl mit the trenches."

"Let's make 'em run," said John. "I can't crawl much farther with this shoulder. I'll get up and run myself, anyhow."

"Yes, they must run," agreed Lieutenant Blake, adding in threatening tones to the prisoners: "Any man that won't run will be shot!"

That was sufficient. As a man the Germans sprang to their feet and made a dash for the trenches, John and Lieutenant Blake at their heels, and a moment later, unscathed, they followed Bronk to safety.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ESCAPE

“**K**ID, you ornery old cayuse, I shore am glad to see you!” Bronk seized John’s hand. “What in tarnation were you doin’ out there? Tryin’ to round up the hull Hun outfit? You shore did make a plumb fine start!” and Bronk crushed John’s hand in his own big horny palm until John winced.

“Let’s go back where I can get a drink of water, and I’ll tell you about it,” said John, who had suddenly gone faint, and leaned back against the trench.

“You pore kid! You’ve got a bad prick in your shoulder, and it’s the same old shoulder you got it in before!” and Bronk, seizing the canteen of a French *poilu*, held it to John’s lips. “Come along out of here, and I’ll help you along to the dressin’ station over in town, and you can rest up, Kid. They’ve pricked you pretty bad, I reckon, the way you look.”

Lieutenant Blake, in the meantime, had briefly told an English-speaking French major of John's performances, and the major came forward to congratulate him upon his capture of the prisoners and release of Lieutenant Blake, and at the same time detailed an orderly to assist Bronk in helping John to the rear and to the village.

"The kid's my pardner," Bronk announced proudly. "I reckon, Major, I don't need any help. I know the trail, you bet. I've hit it several times, totin' stretchers. The kid's got grit. He'll walk."

"But you are wounded, also, in the hand," said the major, observing that Bronk's hand was drenched in blood.

"Nothin' to mention." Bronk, as was his habit, made light of his wound. "That side-wiper of a Hun that shot the pore Frenchy fired low and put a shot through my hand when I was holdin' up my tin hat for him to play at so's I could see where he was. But I got him good and plenty, and I don't mind. It was wuth it, you bet. He won't shoot any more innocent young fellers like me."

"It was most brave of you to carry out my man who was wounded, while you also were wounded," the major commended. "Permit me, *Monsieur*, to thank you—you and your friend—for what you have done this morning. You are brave Americans, and I shall mention you both in my report. Will you do me the honor of telling me your name?"

"Oh, I didn't do much," deprecated Bronk, holding up his wounded left hand to inspect it. "That's just a prick. 'Tain't nothin' to mention. The kid here's the feller that shore did have grit. I've seen him under fire before, and he's plumb full of grit."

"But will you favor me with your name, and that of your friend?" the major insisted.

"Oh, shore!" said Bronk. "My pardner's name is John Adney, but I call him 'Kid'; it's shorter and easier to say. My name's Henery Stevens. Leastways that's what my Ma christened me, but most folks call me 'Bronk'. That's what they called me in Arizona, and I like it best. My shipmates called me 'Long Hank,' because I am a trifle lengthy."

"Thank you, *Monsieur*," and the major smiled and bowed his acknowledgment.

"Say, Major, how's the Frenchy that the Hun sniper got? Is he hurt bad?" asked Bronk.

"Quite seriously, but we hope not fatally. He is a brave soldier, *Monsieur*, and I thank you for your bravery in carrying him back to us," and the major bowed again as he left them.

"Say," remarked Bronk as the officer passed out of hearing, "that Frenchy's a nice sort of feller, ain't he? Now let's get out of here, pronto."

"I'm going with you, Adney," and Lieutenant Blake hurried forward to join them. "I've a little job to attend to over in the village, and if you're not too badly hurt to go with me, I'd like to have you join me in it, and share in the satisfaction of taking an equal part in it, don't you know. It's in connection with what you told me about our former superior on the *Gorgonia*. You understand."

"Thank you! You're a brick to think of me!" John almost forgot his wound in the

prospect of assisting in the capture of the man who had so nearly made him a traitor. "Lieutenant Blake, this is Bronk, my partner, that I told you about—Mr. Henry Stevens, formerly able seaman on the *Gorgonia*. He knows about our second steward, and he's a good man to help us."

"Yes, to be sure," acknowledged Lieutenant Blake. "We shall be happy to have you with us, Mr. Stevens. And I must thank you for the way you helped us this morning, and congratulate you upon the efficient manner in which you put the German sniper out of action. It was jolly fine of you."

"I did get him right, didn't I?" grinned Bronk. "'Twasn't much to do, though. He was so plumb sure he got me, he stuck his head and shoulders out and made a dead sure mark of himself."

The two-mile walk to the village seemed far to John, and once another attack of faintness made necessary a halt. The orderly, detailed by the major, offered to carry him, but John gritted his teeth and declined assistance.

But the dressing station was reached in due

time, and when the wound was cleansed and dressed John declared he felt like going forth with Lieutenant Blake to witness the arrest of the spy, Smith, who he was satisfied "Lieutenant Duclos" would prove to be.

Bronk had wrapped a handkerchief about his wounded hand, and turned to leave without offering it for the surgeon's attention, but Lieutenant Blake directed that it be dressed.

"Oh," said Bronk, reluctantly removing the handkerchief and offering his hand to the surgeon, "'tain't anything but a prick. The bullet went clear through, and it'll be all right, pronto."

The surgeon, however, upon examination, announced that a bone had been pierced, and that it was much more than a prick.

"You'll have to go to hospital with this," the surgeon directed. "If you don't have it attended to and dressed regularly it may cost you your hand. They'll fix it up at the hospital and save it for you. There'll be a slight operation necessary. At best, you'll never use your little finger again."

"All right," said Bronk, "I'll go to the hos-

pital with the kid then, but I never use the little finger much anyhow, and I reckon I can worry along without it."

When the surgeon had attended to Bronk and temporarily dressed his wounded hand, the three proceeded to the eating place provided for the ambulance section. It was still early, and they learned that Lieutenant Duclos had not yet appeared for breakfast.

"I say, now, Adney," Lieutenant Blake suggested, "if he sees me there'll be trouble, or he may slip through our fingers, for he's a suspicious person. He'd recognize me at a distance, don't you know, and every approach to the house is open to his observation. If you and Bronk go up, he'll think you're going to report your return, for you've been reported missing. Suppose you two go, and see if he's there. Make your report and return to me here. He'll surely come to eat, and when he does we'll take him in charge. That'll be the safest course."

"What kind of a report shall I make to him? How much shall I tell him?" John asked.

"Just tell him that you got caught in the barrage yesterday, that your friend was killed and both your ambulances wrecked, and that you were taken prisoner and wounded in making your escape. Tell him the surgeon has ordered you to the hospital, and you will return and report again for duty when you are discharged from hospital."

"Very well," John assented.

"And I'll tell him I got pricked by a sniper when I was bringin' in a wounded Frenchy," suggested Bronk. "And I'll tell him the kid here's my pardner, and we're goin' to the hospital together to get patched up."

"That's correct. Don't say anything that will arouse his suspicion," suggested Lieutenant Blake. "He's a desperate character, don't you know, and there's no telling what the blighter will do if he's put on his guard. He's quite likely made provision for his escape to the German lines, if he's cornered."

"Say," suggested Bronk with a grin, "don't you think we'd best just fetch the measly coyote along with us? We can do it fine."

"No," Lieutenant Blake objected. "Nei-

ther of you is supposed to be armed, and it might lead to complications with the French command if we make a mistake in identity, and this Lieutenant Duclos is not the man we suppose him to be. Let him come down here where I can see him. I know the man we're after pretty well, don't you know, and I can see through any disguise he may have adopted. If this happens to be the wrong man, we don't want to cause him embarrassment."

"Just as you say," Bronk agreed reluctantly. "It's up to you and the kid, and I ain't follerin' trails to trouble if I know it."

And so, in accordance with the arrangement, John and Bronk proceeded at once to the stone house on the hill. The importance of the mission, the realization that Lieutenant Duclos was in all probability a dangerous enemy and a spy in position to do incalculable damage to the Allied cause, which was now the cause of his own beloved land, served as a stimulant to strengthen John, and to render him oblivious to the pain and discomfort of his wound. Under such stimulation one

may accomplish deeds that ordinarily would be far beyond one's strength. His life in the Minnesota lumber camp had doubtless toughened John's body and he was possessed of a constitution that made it possible now to resist the shock and pain of his wound in the performance of what he knew to be his duty.

At the door of the stone house John and Bronk were met by a French orderly who was quite able to interpret their inquiry for Lieutenant Duclos, but whose broken English when he attempted to reply was almost beyond their understanding. At length, however, by means of his small and badly abused English vocabulary, augmented by many signs and gestures, he made himself clear.

Lieutenant Duclos shortly before daybreak had hurriedly left the house on urgent business, and had not yet returned. The orderly did not know where he had gone. Lieutenant Duclos had instructed him to remain on duty until he was relieved.

"Well," remarked Bronk as they hurried back to report to Lieutenant Blake, "he's hit

the trail for parts unknown, but there's one thing sure—he ain't got far away yet. It seems like it would be easy to pick up his trail and ride him down."

CHAPTER XXIII

TRAILING THE SPY

LIEUTENANT BLAKE agreed with Bronk. Lieutenant Duclos had doubtless been warned by signal from the German front that he had been discovered. The signal had doubtless been passed to him directly. John, Lieutenant Blake, and Hans had made their dash from the German trench.

There was every reason to believe the spy had immediately taken to cover or fled the vicinity of the village. He could not have gone far, though his ingenuity for concealment might guide him to temporary safety. At any rate there was no time to be lost.

A visit to the headquarters of the French general commanding the sector, located at the farther end of the village, was Lieutenant Blake's first duty and precaution.

"You and Bronk stay here and rest, Adney," he directed. "You're quite done up.

You must be transferred to a hospital at once. At any rate, you must rest or you'll have that wound inflamed. I must go and report such information as we've gathered as well as report on the spy. I'll be back directly."

"But I've information to report, too," John objected. "It is what I learned before we found you in the dugout. Can't I go with you?"

"Let me carry such information as you have, and I'll report it as coming from you. You'll have to keep quiet, Adney. You're looking badly done up, don't you know, and I'm alarmed for you."

"Yes, Kid, you stay here, and I'll stay with you," Bronk seconded. "You shore are look-in' washed out."

With this urging John told Lieutenant Blake what he had learned from Hans of the German disposition of troops, expected attack on the French, and capture of the hill to obviate a flank movement on the part of the British. Lieutenant Blake promised that Hans, who was now held with the prisoners in the village, awaiting transference to the

rear, would be summoned to headquarters and questioned. There was no doubt that even more valuable information could be drawn from him.

"We'll get it all out of him," Lieutenant Blake assured. "Don't let that trouble you, Adney. It's time to eat and you must be famished. I am. You and Bronk had better go and get your breakfast, and then have them run you out to the hospital. When I'm finished at headquarters I'll snatch a bite to eat, and come back here to see you before you go."

John and Bronk entered the ambulance mess room. Those of the drivers who were not absent on duty were at breakfast, and when John came into the room they arose and cheered. He and Billy had, as Lieutenant Blake surmised, been reported missing, and a report had come from the British lines that their ambulances had been demolished by a shell and that both had been killed. John's appearance was, therefore, hailed with joy.

But when John told of Billy's death and the manner in which he died, gloom fell upon the section. Billy was a general favorite with

his comrades, though he had been with the section but a short time. Someone suggested that they must rescue the body and give it a Christian burial in the village. Though the road to the spot where Billy had fallen was under German observation and open to German artillery fire, there was no lack of volunteers to undertake the dangerous mission of recovering his remains. They were agreed that his mother must know that her boy's comrades had not left his body neglected and uncared for in an unmarked grave.

"We can go more safely after dark," one suggested. "I'll run out there with my car and get him tonight. I'll find him. The British have been too busy fighting since yesterday morning to bury the dead."

John was lauded as a hero. They looked upon his escape from the German lines as a marvelous achievement and exhibition of initiative, resourcefulness, and daring. And when Bronk told of John's "round-up of a hull herd of German prisoners," they would have lifted him upon their shoulders and carried him around the room, had it not been for

his wound, though he protested he had done nothing unusual, and that his capture of the Germans was really an accident and not in the least due to bravery or heroism.

"I was scared stiff and just had to do it to save myself," he declared. "You see I couldn't help it fellows. I was in a trap and had to get out of it, and that was the easiest and I thought the only way out of it. Bronk had to help me in the end or they'd have killed me anyhow."

"Why you'll get all sorts of mention and hero medals for this," declared one of the seasoned drivers. "You deserve 'em too, and a lot more than they can ever give you!"

"Have you reported to the section commander?" another asked. "He'll be glad to know you're back, even if you did lose your car, and he'll make all sorts of good reports on you."

"I tried to see him and report my return," explained John, "but he isn't at his headquarters or anywhere about."

"I came in with my car from duty just before daylight," said another, "and as I drove

into the yard Lieutenant Duclos' car was going out. He was in the dickens of a hurry. A sudden call, probably, to the hospital. It isn't likely he's back yet."

"Which way did he go?" asked John, well aware of the cause that had called the man away so hurriedly.

"On the road through the village, the road we came in on when we came from Paris. Since the attack you were caught in yesterday morning, Adney, we have to run out that way a few miles and then take a crossroad to go to the hospital. It's likely he was bound for the hospital."

"Likely that's the trail he's follerin'," remarked Bronk in a tone so tinged with irony that one of the drivers asked:

"Don't you think he's gone to the hospital? There's nowhere else he can go unless he's been called to Paris."

"Oh, shore!" said Bronk. "I'm not sayin' he ain't hittin' the trail for the hospital, if he ain't been called to Paris. Shore he is!"

They were just emerging from the mess room when Lieutenant Blake appeared.

"Adney," he announced, "I'll take you and Bronk to a hospital. It won't be necessary to call out an ambulance. We'll be on an open road for a little way, and the Huns may try to make a target of us, but it won't be for long."

"Very well," agreed John, "we're ready to go."

Presently a touring car appeared with a British Tommy at the wheel, and drew up to admit them. Lieutenant Blake seated himself with the driver, while John and Bronk occupied the rear seat. They halted at military headquarters, and as the car came to a stop an officer in the uniform of a British colonel emerged from the building. As he approached the car John recognized Colonel Dillingham.

"Young man," said the colonel, "I wish to thank you for the valuable information that you brought us from the German lines this morning, and conveyed to us through Lieutenant Blake. I assure you of its appreciation by the British staff.

"I also wish to thank you for your heroic

rescue of Lieutenant Blake and the capture of the Germans who had him in custody. That was a noteworthy feat. I am sorry you were wounded, and hope you will soon recover. You will be a valuable man for the American forces, which will soon be in France."

"Thank you, Colonel Dillingham. I only did my duty," John acknowledged, in confusion.

"Why, you're my young steward of the *Gorgonia!*" exclaimed the colonel. "Pardon me for not recognizing you at once in your uniform. Let me congratulate you again."

"The kid shore has got grit," broke in Bronk, who could not lose the opportunity to sound his friend's praise.

"Is this the American cowboy you mentioned, Lieutenant Blake?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, sir," said Lieutenant Blake. "The American cowboy-sailor, Henry Stevens."

"Call me Bronk and I'll answer to it," Bronk grinned.

"Let me compliment you also," the colonel smiled. "Your most courageous act was reported to me by Lieutenant Blake. You had

better hurry on your mission, Blake. Success to you."

"He's a fine feller now," Bronk commented as the car rolled away.

"Lieutenant Blake, I've heard something about our section commander," said John. "He left early this morning in his car apparently on the road to Paris."

"Yes, I've heard all about it. I've been busy, don't you know, since I left you. I think we'll find him. I'm confident we shall. We're going to Paris."

For nearly three miles after passing through the village the road was exposed to the fire of German gunners, and several shells burst in front of and behind the speeding car. Bronk could not refrain from frequent whoops of derision as each shell failed to find its mark.

"Them Huns couldn't draw a bead on anything," he remarked scornfully as they passed to safety under the shelter of the hills.

It was a trying ride for John. The pain in his wounded shoulder increased, and he was glad when Lieutenant Blake announced that at nightfall they would stop in one of

the numerous villages through which they would be passing for a few hours needed rest.

"We can't spare ourselves, don't you know," said he. "We must get you chaps in a hospital, and my business requires haste, but we've been going pretty steadily for thirty-six hours, and we can't keep it up without a wink of sleep to put us in condition. I'm taking you to Paris because the hospital you visited, Adney, at the time your ambulance was wrecked is crowded with wounded from the attack yesterday. It's a little hard on you to go so far, but it's better to go this way than by train. In Paris you'll be more comfortable too. It'll be dark in another hour, and then we'll stop till midnight and rest a bit. We've made a jolly good run today."

It was half an hour later when they saw a disabled car standing in the road ahead of them, and a man in the uniform of the American Ambulance stooping over the motor busily engaged in making an adjustment or repair. As they approached the car, John leaned over to Lieutenant Blake and said excitedly:

“That’s Lieutenant Duclos’ car! I’m sure of it!”

At that instant the man raised his head, saw Lieutenant Blake, and springing behind his car drew his automatic and opened fire. It was Smith, the spy.

CHAPTER XXIV

“THE YANKS ARE HERE!”

THE cornered spy was plainly in a state of hopeless panic. Now that he saw no road of escape open to him his nerve and skill seemed to have forsaken him. He fired wildly, his shots whistling over the heads of the men in the car. In an effort to protect himself he crouched low behind his own car, and with no pretense at aim fired indiscriminately and at haphazard in the general direction of the other car. Only his hand holding the pistol as it spat bullets was visible at the top of the motor hood.

With the first shot Lieutenant Blake, the Tommy, and Bronk slid out of their car on its opposite side, placing it between them and the spy, while John, whose experience in No Man's Land had taught him the expediency of lying flat when under fire, threw himself to the floor of the car.

Lieutenant Blake drew his pistol, and from a position behind the hood of his car vainly endeavored to find an opening to place a shot, but the spy was too well covered to be reached.

Bronk, after his manner, was not idle. Crawling upon hands and knees around the rear of the car he crossed the road. Then rising to a stooped position, his revolver in his right hand, he stole around the rear of the spy's car, and as the spy emptied his automatic, and was in the act of slipping a fresh clip of cartridges into the magazine, Bronk said coolly:

"I've got the drop on you, Steward! The game's up! No more shootin'!"

The man turned, and as he saw Bronk a look of wild and awful fear came into his craven face. For a moment he stood dazed, and then suddenly turned the automatic against his own head and pulled the trigger, his brain too dulled by fear to remember that the chamber of the gun was empty. There was no answering report, and denied the coward's refuge of suicide, he flung the auto-

matic spasmodically at Bronk, almost sobbing, as he did so:

"You swine! You swine!"

"You're welcome to call me that. It don't hurt none," Bronk grinned. "Leastways we ain't baby killers and spies. Now you low-lived skunk, if I can find a rope handy I'm goin' to hog tie you so's you won't get away. Here's your coyote," he added, turning to Lieutenant Blake who had joined him with the Tommy and John. "He's scared plumb crazy too. That's the way with 'em mostly when they're cornered. They only fight when they've got things their own way. Better give him a flirt to see he ain't got any more guns on him."

"You won't kill me?" whimpered the former steward. "You won't kill me, will you? We were shipmates together! I was always good to you then! You wouldn't hurt an old shipmate, would you? Adney, you'll help me, won't you? I was good to you and helped you when you were friendless in New York!"

"You tried to make a traitor of me!" John

exclaimed in disgust. "I've nothing to say about what's done with you."

He continued to beg for mercy while he was searched and his car was searched, and Bronk bound him securely, and John, in spite of all the anger he had felt toward the man, could not but pity him.

"Adney," said Lieutenant Blake when these precautions had been taken, "there's a village two or three miles beyond here. I'll take you and Bronk there and find you quarters where you can wait while I take this man back and deliver him to Colonel Dillingham. It's too bad to delay you, don't you know, for you should both be hurried to the hospital, but you know how urgent it is. You'll only have to wait till sometime tomorrow. I'll send the car right back to take you on. It'll pick you up tomorrow."

"That's all right," John agreed. "Another day won't make much difference and I'm so dead tired and sleepy I'd like the chance to rest."

"Shore it won't make any difference!" Bronk seconded. "We'll get in a fine sleep

and be perked up and fresh to go to the hospital."

"That's jolly fine of you both. In my report I'll not forget to give you credit for the splendid way in which you handled the situation here today, Bronk. Now I'll stay here with the prisoner while Billings runs you over to the village."

"What's the matter with this car? If it will run I can drive it to the village with my good hand," and John looked under the raised motor hood, where the spy, Smith, had been working when he was surprised. "Look's as though he was putting in a fresh spark plug. If that's all, we can fix it in a minute."

A discarded spark plug lay upon the running board, and a new one was partly screwed into place, with the wrench still upon it. Billings, the Tommy, completed the adjustment in a moment, and a test proved the car to be in excellent running order.

"Bronk and I will go on to the village in this," said John, taking his place at the wheel. "We'll wait there till a car comes to take us to Paris."

"That's jolly good of you, Adney. I'll hurry the car back," and Lieutenant Blake reached over and shook hands with his friends. "I won't say good-bye, for the moment I'm free to do so I'll come to Paris to see you both, don't you know."

Ten minutes later John and Bronk drew into the village, where they had no difficulty in finding comfortable lodgings. Since his brief sleep in the dugout the previous day John had hardly found a moment in which to rest, and though his wounded shoulder had become inflamed and painful with constant exertion he was so weary that he did not awake until late the following morning.

In mid-afternoon the car came for them, as Lieutenant Blake had promised, and that night they were taken to the hospital in Paris, where, so short a time before, they had met Billy upon their entrance into the Ambulance Service.

The next morning the surgeon extracted a bullet from John's shoulder. Bronk's hand was much more seriously injured than he had admitted, and an operation was necessary to

remove a splintered bone, and to Bronk's disappointment he was compelled to remain a patient in the hospital.

One morning a week later John was thrilled upon awaking by a familiar cheerful voice, and opening his eyes discovered Doctor Gregory leaning over him.

"Well! Well! In hospital again! Doing finely though, I hear. And your old friend Bronk is with you! Sort of work in pairs don't you? Glad I'm back to take care of you."

"Doc, I'm shore glad to see you," exclaimed Bronk, who was in the adjoining cot.

"Doctor Gregory!" John could scarcely believe his eyes and ears or voice his pleasure.

"I hear great things about you both, but I won't talk about it now. Time enough when you're up and about. Want you to tell me all about your big adventure then!" and as though to turn the subject, he announced: "We're going to have some distinguished visitors here today, I hear. Know anything about it?"

"No, who are they?" asked John.

"Can't tell you who they are. Don't know myself. Just heard distinguished visitors were coming to see us. How are you feeling this morning?"

"Fine and dandy, Doctor, and now you're here to look after us we'll both soon be well."

"Flattery! Rank flattery, you rascal! But we'll do our best for you. I've some good news for you, my boy. Want to hear it?"

"Of course I do! I need good news, tied up here in a hospital wasting my time when I'm needed down at the front."

"Cheer up, you're fortunate to be alive after your escapades. I wrote a lawyer friend of mine when I first met you in Brest. Asked about that man, Squibb. Just have a long letter saying Squibb is under arrest for crooked dealing. Cheated a lot of people. Among other things discovered he had manipulated your father's estate, and transferred everything to his own name, basing his claims upon forged notes. Best of it is, he has enough to return the most of what he stole. The court is holding your property for you and Ben. You'll have no more worries about

money matters. You're well off, my boy. Let me congratulate you."

John could scarcely believe what he heard, and he must needs ask many questions and receive many assurances from Doctor Gregory before his doubts were removed.

"Bronk," said John when the doctor had left them, "perhaps we can continue partners when we go home. Will you let me in on the ranch? I might furnish the money and you the experience."

"Well now I shore would like to have you as a ranch pardner, Kid!" and Bronk was quite delighted at the suggestion. "Maybe after the war we can work it out."

Not that day but the following morning the ward was thrown into a flutter of excitement by the appearance of a French general accompanied by several French and British officers, among the latter Lieutenant Blake, now wearing the insignia of a captain. The general was recognized by the patients, and a cheer went up from the cots.

To John's astonishment they approached his bed, and he was quite overwhelmed when,

with a few courteous and dignified words, the general presented him with the *croix de guerre*, and then turning to Bronk conferred upon him a like honor.

"I ain't done anything for this," protested Bronk looking helplessly at the medal. "The kid here did it all. He's grit clean through! He rounded up a hull herd of Huns!"

It was a few days later, when John was permitted to move about the hospital and Bronk, his arm in a sling, had the freedom of the streets, that Bronk came hurrying in one day, his face beaming, as he shouted:

"The Yanks are here! The Yanks are here! Come, Kid, quick and see 'em! They're marching up the street!"

There was the sound of martial music as John hastened to the street door with Bronk, and looking down the street he beheld a long, khaki-clad line and the glorious old Stars and Stripes. A thrill ran up his spine and tears filled his eyes. Then a feeling of exaltation took possession of him, and as the column approached he and Bronk, without quite knowing it, began cheering. A young lieutenant

of the line glanced up at the two wildly enthusiastic figures, and a look of astonished pleasure spread over his face. It was Ben, John's brother.

Of course Ben visited John at the hospital that day, and of course the meeting was the joyful, happy meeting it should have been, and Ben was prouder than ever he had been in his life at the achievements of his brother.

Regulars took the place of the volunteer ambulance drivers, and John was not again to drive an ambulance. But he found useful employment in the Red Cross service until the time came when he was permitted to enlist, and he joined Bronk in the United States Marine Corps, which Bronk had finally chosen in preference to the "calvary."

"I reckon," Bronk one day decided, "that the calvary ain't goin' to have much show for fightin' in this war. I'm lookin' for fightin' and I'm shore likely to get it if I hitch up with the marine outfit. They're kind of betwixt the land and sea, and I reckon I'll hook up with 'em."

038284

